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SCANDINAVIAN NEUTRALITY, 1938 - 1940

by



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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and
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ABSTRACT

In 1938 the four Scandinavian States embarked on the path of neutrality in an increasingly belligerent world. By the middle of 1940 three of the four countries had been invaded and defeated; the fourth struggled through what was no longer considered neutrality. It will be the purpose of this thesis to discuss Scandinavian neutrality from the period May, 1938, when it was introduced, to shortly after the German invasion of April, 1940.

The primary questions to be raised are whether neutrality was a viable policy, what steps were taken to insure its workability, and what were the agents of its destruction. Accordingly, the first chapter will deal with the reasons behind the policy of neutrality as well as the situation in existence at the time. The second chapter will deal with attempts at Scandinavian cooperation for the purpose of strengthening the neutrality policy. The outbreak of the Second World War and relations, particularly economic, with the belligerents is the subject of the third chapter. Finland's difficulties with the Soviet Union and the subsequent Finno-Soviet War is dealt with in the fourth chapter. The last chapter deals with Operation 'Weseruebung' -- the German invasion of Denmark and Norway and the pressure exerted on Sweden to force this country to follow a distinctly, official policy of friendship with Germany.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abbreviations	iv
Abstract	v
Chapter I	
Scandinavian Neutrality	1
Chapter II	
Scandinavian Cooperation and Events to the Outbreak of World War II	27
Chapter III	
The Outbreak of World War II and Trade with the Belligerents	64
Chapter IV	
Finland Succumbs to the Soviet Union	105
Chapter V	
Operation Weseruebung and the Aftermath	126
Conclusion	164
Bibliography	171
Appendix	176

ABBREVIATIONS

- BD Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939. Third Series.
- GD Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945 Series D.
- Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression - U.S. Chief of Council for
Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Nazi Conspiracy and
Aggression Vol. 1.
- SEHR Scandinavian Economic History Review.
- Trials Nuernberg Military Tribunal. Trials of War Criminals
Before the Nurenberg Military Tribunals.

CHAPTER I

Scandinavian Neutrality

In October 1935 economic sanctions were imposed by the members of the League of Nations on the Italian State because of the latter's attack on Abyssinia. Oil, iron, and steel, were, however, excluded from the boycott and before long Article XVI¹ of the League of Nations' Covenant was, for all intents and purposes, a dead letter. Article XVI was the crux of interwar collective security. With its virtual renegation in 1935 the small countries lost faith in the League's ability to withstand acts of aggression. This was of particular importance for the Scandinavian States which had based their interwar policies on the premise of collective security. The six ex-neutral states of the First World War (the three Scandinavian States, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland) and Finland had taken the first step towards the abolition of the League's Article XVI in 1936. On July 1, 1936, the Foreign Ministers of these countries had issued a communiqué expressing their apprehension regarding the status of the article dealing with the reduction of armaments. So long as this article remained a dead letter and the Covenant

¹Article XVI states that, should a member of the League of Nations resort to war, in disregard of the Covenant, against another member, it shall ipso facto be deemed to have committed war against all the members. Military action by the League members would accordingly be taken to protect the Covenant.

Cited in Chambers, Frank P., Christina Phelps Harris and Charles C. Bayley, This Age of Conflict, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950, Appendix F.

was applied only incompletely and inconsistently, they were obliged to keep this in mind in connection with the application of Article XVI.² Early in 1938 the Swedish Government suggested that these States should carry forth and complete the thoughts expressed in their discussions in 1936, that is, that they adopt a position demanding that Article XVI no longer assumed an obligatory character. Denmark hesitated to do away with Article XVI altogether since it might conceivably help her in the future, or at least, act as a deterrent to aggression from Germany. With the occupation of Austria in March 1938, however, Denmark saw the uselessness of Article XVI as an instrument against aggression. The seven member States of the Oslo Powers (the Scandinavian States, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands) who had been cooperating closely in the League were invited to Copenhagen in July to discuss what stand should be taken on the question of sanctions which would undoubtedly be discussed at the League of Nations meeting the following September. Switzerland was also invited to Copenhagen but declined owing to the fear of compromising her neutrality. A communiqué was issued which stated that the Oslo Powers no longer viewed the sanctions system as having an obligatory character.³ By this action these seven States had taken the step away from the

² League of Nations Documents, C. 357, M. 233, 1936, VII (Annex), p. 5, cited in S. Shepard Jones, The Scandinavian States and the League of Nations, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1939, p. 274.

³ Viggo Sjøqvist, Danmarks Udenrigspolitik 1933 - 1940, Copenhagen, Gyldendal, 1966, p. 240.

League of Nations and reverted to the neutrality system which had existed before August 1914.

There can be no doubt that Germany was pleased with the action taken by these countries with their stand on sanctions. In the opinion of German leaders, however, the seven States had not gone far enough. The German Foreign Ministry made it clear to the Oslo Powers that in order to remain outside any future conflicts they must return to total neutrality, which required the unequivocal repudiation, and not merely the relaxation, of the obligations listed under Article XVI.⁴ This far the seven were unwilling to go.

The Oslo Powers would continue to work through the League of Nations, but could no longer regard the sanctions system as obligatory upon themselves or upon any other League member. The Belgian Ambassador in Copenhagen confidentially informed Germany's representative that the next step would be for one of the Oslo Powers to approach England and France before the next session of the League at Geneva with the object of obtaining a formal release from the obligations under Article XVI, basing their hopes on the argument that prior to such a release it was unlikely that any small state would declare a Great Power an 'aggressor', should the occasion present itself.⁵

One cannot really blame the small states for their attitude towards collective security and the League of Nations. Throughout the interwar period there were instances where right was synonymous with

⁴GD V No. 436.

⁵Ibid., No. 443

might. One need only look at all the world crises that involved a small power and a big power. The big power generally realized its objective over the pleas of the smaller nation. This was the case with Italy and Greece in 1923, Japan and China in 1931 and thereafter, Italy and Abyssinia in 1935, Czechoslovakia and the Great Powers in 1938. All too often were the Great Powers unwilling to use the instruments of the League to curb the aggressive tendencies of their fellows. In their hesitation one can detect the fear that these same League instruments may one day be turned against any Great Power which today voted for sanctions against one of its colleagues. This deplorable situation was particularly apparent in 1935 over the crisis in Abyssinia. As Sweden's representative to the League, Osten Unden, stated in 1938, "The smaller States -- often regarded as timid and hesitating in the matter of the application of sanctions -- cannot rightly be held responsible for the failure of the League. On the contrary, it is rather the States which in theory uphold Article XVI most strongly that have raised objections to the application and continuance of economic sanctions during these years (i.e., 1931 - 37)."⁶

The question may be asked: why did these small states wish to remain in the League, even while admitting without reservation that

⁶ Minutes of the Third Session of the Committee set up to Study the Application of the Principles of the Covenant (January 31 to February 2, 1938), League of Nations Documents, A.7, 1938, VII, p. 9, cited in Jones, Scandinavian States, p. 274.

this organization was powerless in the preservation of peace? The answer is complex. Public opinion in these countries always made the point that the League could still be of some use: it constituted at all events some form of international organization, it did considerable humanitarian work, and it enabled the politicians on the world stage to consult with one another. If the question of fulfilment of political obligations could be overcome there would be no danger in remaining a member. Furthermore, secession from the League, in view of the international situation, might be interpreted as an orientation towards the League's enemies since withdrawal would constitute a rejection of the Western Powers who dominated the League of Nations and could be interpreted as an alignment with those countries standing outside.

For the politicians membership in the League was not so simple. These individuals were not always convinced that the states belonging to the League did represent the ideals for which they claimed to stand: the Soviet Union cast hungry glances towards its neighbours in much the same way as Germany did. There was not even complete unanimity that the victory of Germany in a world conflict would be a total disaster as the fear of an aggressive Soviet Union was a very real entity.

The Scandinavian contribution to the League of Nations is, at best, difficult to evaluate. In her work, The Scandinavian States and The League of Nations, S. Shepard Jones expresses her belief that the Scandinavian nations acted to serve as an "ever alert conscience

to the Great Powers."⁷ These small northern countries acted as spokesmen for justice in their interest of humanity. They strove to speak out against the injustices that daily took place in the last years before the outbreak of the war that people were increasingly coming to expect.

The attitude to Germany at this time was mixed. Cordial relations had traditionally existed between the Scandinavian States and Germany though these had cooled decidedly with the coming to power of Hitler. Apart from apprehensions about German aggression most Scandinavian animosity stemmed from the German attempt to infiltrate the Nordic cultural society.

At work in Scandinavia during this period was the Nordic Society (Nordische Gesellschaft), and the Nordic Liaison Office (Nordische Verbindungstelle), agencies, respectively, of the Aussenpolitisches Amt and the Propaganda Ministry. The purpose of both groups was to influence the public to exert a pro-German bias on their government. The Nordic Liaison Office did its job well and in a professional manner. With the Nordic Society, nominally a cultural and scientific association, the case was totally different, and therefore, this organization is the more interesting of the two. Virtually from its conception the organization had shown itself to be totally chaotic and irresponsible. Events had come to the point that by 1938 a complete reorganization was being called for. Following the decision to re-evaluate the Nordic Society the Legations

⁷ Jones, Scandinavian States, pp. 274-5

in the Scandinavian countries were called upon to submit reports which should contain an evaluation of the activity of the Society during recent years, the mistakes made, good results achieved, and positive proposals for a reorganization.⁸

In Norway, Germany's Ambassador, Dr. Sahm, wrote that there was no doubt as to the need for the Nordic Society, since it could render important and valuable services in the field of cultural relations between Germany and Scandinavia. In Norway, the country was outwardly pleased by the friendly German advances through the Nordic Society but in reality had its own ideas about such constant one-sided courtship by a Great Power. The aim of the Nordic Society was largely cultural interaction and to this end prominent individuals were invited to Luebeck each year for a Nordic Congress. The Society, however, was not always fortunate in the type of guests that were invited. Of the proposed list of Norwegian journalists to be invited to the 1938 Congress almost 90 percent had to be stricken from the lists because they were either politically quite impossible or altogether insignificant. In closing, the German Ambassador went on to say that at the present time, as far as Norway was concerned, the Nordic Society had only the support of persons of little or no importance in the country.⁹

The task of the Nordic Society in Finland, as defined by the German Ambassador in Helsinki, Bluecher, was: 1) to arrange for large

⁸GD V No. 427. Von Grundherr at the German Foreign Ministry had called the manner of the Nordic Society's action, "courting the small States in a manner rather unseemly for a Great Power."

⁹Ibid., No. 428.

cultural functions in Germany and Finland, 2) to invite Finnish speakers and authors to Germany, 3) to disseminate Finnish literature in Germany, and 4) to publish and establish a press service. The Society appears to have enjoyed adequate, if not overwhelming, financial support from the German Government, but even so there was little to show that it was in any way successful in promoting closer ties between Finland and Germany. As Bluecher goes on to say, "To the question, what influence the Nordic Society as such exerts in Finland, one could hardly be wrong in answering that this is limited to those who were its guests or who benefited by it in some other way. Other than those it has hardly acquired any supporters."¹⁰ Going even further, he says that it is difficult for a German society, in a period of National Socialism, to gain a foothold in a country which was more than 40 percent socialist and over 90 percent democratic. It was clear to Bluecher that the Society's policy of extending invitations to mass rallies in Luebeck to the Finns was not working and he urged his Government to court only individual influential persons in Finland in order to achieve the desired results.¹¹

German Ambassador Below in Sweden was particularly antagonistic towards the Nordic Society. Below believed that a certain amount of hostility surrounded the Society because of a few blunders in the past which had furnished the Swedish public with evidence that the Nordic

¹⁰GD V No. 429.

¹¹Loc. cit.

Society dealt not only with cultural but also with economic and political matters.¹² This had led Swedish circles to perceive the Nordic Society as an instrument of National Socialist imperialism under the guise of a Nordic cultural and racial community. This feeling was supported particularly when viewing the great number of leading personages in the Third Reich and Nazi Party who belonged to the Society and were among its leaders, yet had no cultural or scientific connection with the North. As in Norway and Finland, the Society in Sweden was often unfortunate in the type of individual whom it invited to Germany. Among the writers invited to the writers' center at Travemuende, two had become prominent in the ranks of the leftist-radical intellectual element lending their support to manifestoes in favor of the Spanish Loyalists and against the fascist states. Another guest was a writer known for many years for her hostile antagonism towards the Third Reich. Yet another was the literary collaborator of one of the largest Jewish publishing houses in Sweden who had previously distinguished himself by executing a belittling article on Hitler in the Swedish press. Even so it was becoming more and more difficult for the Society to have invitations accepted and in Swedish circles concerned it was almost regarded as a favor if a writer accepted an invitation to Travemuende.

¹²In 1934 two confidential circular letters of the Society were published which concerned the internal events of two prominent Swedish dailies and the financial situation of a third. The letters also discussed the possibilities of encouraging German exports and of giving German advertisement to the Swedish press in order to influence the attitude of the individual newspapers vis-à-vis the Third Reich. GD V No. 431.

Much the same situation prevailed with the invitation of Swedes to the Congress at Luebeck. For instance, Professor Romdahl, a noted art historian, was described to the German authorities as a prominent pro-German Swede with strong sympathies for National Socialism. When Romdahl came to Germany, he greatly embarrassed his hosts when he expressed his sympathies for his former Jewish teachers and friends.¹³

In conclusion, Below stated that particularly in those circles that the Society wished to attract, the Nordic idea propagated by the Society was misconstrued and rejected. In the Swedish view, and this may be assumed to be prevailing throughout the Scandinavian countries, 'Nordic' was a concept limited exclusively to the Northern European countries and had a definite and narrow meaning. Included in this were above all freedom of expression of opinion, political thought and action in the form of elections and majority decisions, which were considered genuinely 'Germanic'. Added to this was a strong tolerance for those who thought otherwise, without regard to racial and party allegiance. This had lead circles in Sweden to the view that Germany through her dictatorial regime had renounced true Germanic freedom and therefore was not fit to be the 'herald of the Nordic idea in the North.' These circles therefore suspected Germany's aims to be political and intellectual expansion.¹⁴

¹³GD V No. 431.

¹⁴Loc. cit.

In Denmark the situation was totally different. In this country was expressed a stronger feeling of kinship with Germany and, on the other hand, a stronger consciousness of the ideological antagonism. Because of this there existed a brisk tourist traffic between the two countries as well as an extraordinary sensitivity to all aspects of German propaganda. Being well aware of the situation as it existed, the German Legation in Copenhagen had kept in close contact with the Nordic Society and had established a good working relationship with the head of the Society in Denmark, something that was very much lacking in the other countries, and in this manner had succeeded in directing the emphasis of the activity of the Nordic Society in Denmark to the cultural field. There were still a number of complaints about the workings of the Society and suggestions for improving efficiency but, generally speaking, there were not the instances of inviting anti-Nazi individuals as was so prevalent in most of the other Scandinavian countries.¹⁵

With the expectation of imminent war the Scandinavian States on May 27, 1938, issued a communiqué in which they invoked a policy of neutrality. This decision had come after much introspective thought in the Scandinavian capitals. After the disillusionment with the League in 1936 there had been two alternatives open to the Scandinavian States: they could 'go it alone', that is, each could fend for herself, or they could make some arrangement for mutual defence.

¹⁵Ibid., No. 432.

The first alternative would risk their being picked off one by one, while the second involved the risk of one country becoming involved in someone else's troubles. However, united they would be able to better resist aggression — provided the countries were armed and therefore a source of strength to each other, and, secondly, provided they were prepared to resist the same kind of pressure. Both these elements were found to be missing. First of all, Denmark could only be threatened from Germany, but was practically indefensible against attack from that quarter. Norway was eminently defensible against either Russia or Germany but the policies of the pacifist Foreign Minister, Koht, neutralized this potential. Finland was both defensible and willing to fight, though ill-equipped. However, the threat to Finland came from Russia and therefore the Finns could be expected to have some sympathies with the Germans. The end result of this was that there was a good chance that the Scandinavian countries might end up fighting one another as had almost been the case in 1914 before the countries decided upon neutrality (though Finland was not a member of Scandinavia at this time and did not become a neutral till after 1917). Sweden would be the corner-stone of any Northern association. She was in no danger of invasion from any quarter and possessed the economic strength to arm herself and the rest of Scandinavia. Furthermore, Sweden was willing to realistically face the crisis — as shown by the decision to double arms expenditures in response to the League's sanctions debate in 1936. However, Sweden was not in a position to fight for all of Scandinavia by herself.

As becomes readily apparent there were many frightening aspects to a policy of Scandinavian neutrality, not least of which was defense.

Scandinavia had a long tradition of neutrality, peace and prosperity. Denmark had not been at war since 1864. After the end of the First World War, Denmark had largely disarmed herself putting her trust in the League of Nations and collective security. Now, with the declaration of neutrality, there was no collective security nor had the plans for Scandinavian cooperation reached the point where they might offer a hope of protection. In this atmosphere the question for Denmark was whether to make the sacrifices needed to expand the military capabilities of the country, or not to resist aggression. The relationship with Germany was already tense. Since November 1937 Germany had been negotiating with Denmark for the purpose of obtaining permission, in the event of war, to fly military planes over the Danish territorial waters guarding the entrance to the Baltic. By January the following year it had become apparent from the German demands that Denmark would be forced to give Germany permission for general overflights through the three Danish waterways: the two Belts and the Sound. The Swedish Government, upon being informed of the situation, stated that it was ready to declare the Swedish part of the Sound open for overflights. The British Government was informed of the situation but did not appear particularly interested till some time after the publication of the neutrality regulations in May 1938.

Norwegian neutrality had several sources: one was the general trend towards neutrality which she enjoyed while a member of the Norwegian-Swedish union from 1814 to 1905; neutrality was also a consequence of Norwegian shipping interests which would undoubtedly be hurt if

Norway was to become embroiled in a war; a third factor was the pacifist orientation that emerged out of the liberal and peace movement of the latter part of the nineteenth century. Norwegian neutrality, as opposed to Swedish, was largely verbal. Norway felt herself virtually isolated geographically: only from the Atlantic, where the British ruled supreme, could she be attacked and Norway had always enjoyed excellent relations with Britain. Because of this feeling of isolation Norway did not feel compelled to arm herself in the manner that Sweden did. Likewise, Norwegian pacifism, the sentiment of the 'twenties which was still carried into the 'thirties, had left Norwegian defenses in a deplorable state. One example may illustrate the prevailing mood: the sealed mobilization orders which had been deposited some time earlier in the nation's churches, ready to be opened when the need arose, had lately been removed.¹⁶

Sweden had remained outside any major war since the time of Napoleon. During the First World War, although to a considerable extent pro-German, Sweden had joined with the other Scandinavian nations in maintaining neutrality. In the 'twenties Sweden had been governed by a belief in collective security and the League, though by the 'thirties disillusionment had begun to set in. In the remaining few years before the outbreak of the Second World War, Sweden could be said to have been governed by a widespread cynicism. War was inevitable. This cynicism wanted one group, which represented the highest aims of humanity, to be victorious. This group was the

¹⁶Karen Larsen, A History of Norway, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1948, p. 535.

Western Powers. But it was felt these States would become contaminated during the fight with all the evil aspects which arise from war — censorship, restrictions on freedom, hatred, violence, etc. If the Western Powers were victorious, a great day would dawn for all the neutrals, for humanity would have been saved without the need for themselves to make any sacrifices and the neutrals would, theoretically, come out purest of all for they would not have been contaminated with war as would be the case of the victors. And if the Western Powers lost? Well, for those not directly involved in the war there would always be some way to survive. While such an attitude is hard to believe, this was nonetheless the public view in Sweden according to a large number of newspapers published at the time.¹⁷

Finland had been part of the Russian Empire till 1917 when independence had been declared in the midst of revolution. At first, in the years following independence, Finland had aligned herself with Poland and the Baltic States in foreign policy. In these countries were met the same strong suspicions of future Soviet plans. By 1935, however, Finland had moved to a Scandinavian orientation in foreign policy in the face of the cleavage arising between Germany and Italy on the one hand and the Western democracies on the other. By 1937 Finland found herself to be the link between Scandinavian and Baltic States in what may be called a short-lived 'entente' against Germany and Russia. This understanding, for that is all it really was, among

¹⁷Herbert Tingsten, The Debate on the Foreign Policy of Sweden, 1918 - 1939, London, Oxford University Press, 1949, p. 221.

the seven northern States was not secured by a formal treaty of alliance since they could never hope to withstand a determined attempt at aggression by either of their powerful neighbours, but their 'entente' could be expected to act as a deterrent to such ambitions. Finland's acceptance in the Scandinavian neutral bloc was at first hindered by the relationship which had existed between Finland and Germany in the first years of independence and which now also threatened to destroy Soviet faith in Finnish neutrality. Because of this, Finno-German relations became progressively cooler from 1937 on. But there is no doubt that a defensive alliance with Sweden was the ultimate aim of Finnish and, to some extent, Swedish policy in this period of Finnish realignment. Swedish Foreign Minister Sandler openly worked for the conclusion of a Finno-Swedish alliance.¹⁸

It was in such an atmosphere and with the world approaching the brink of war as a result of the mounting Czechoslovak crisis that the Scandinavian States issued a Declaration of Neutrality on May 27, 1938. The Protocol stated that the Governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden had adopted similar rules of neutrality to be invoked in the event of war between foreign powers. The regulations were derived from the international agreements adopted at the Hague in 1907 and could not be changed without due notification to the other signatories. The articles of the treaty

¹⁸ Anatole G. Mazour, Finland Between East and West, Princeton, D. Van Nostrand Co., 1956, p. 99.

dealt primarily with access to neutral harbours and territorial waters etc., by warships belonging to belligerents. While many of these aspects of the treaty were covered by the neutrality regulations adopted by Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 1912 it was felt that these regulations had to be supplemented in view of the experiences and technological advances since the First World War.¹⁹

But while the Scandinavian States now had the machinery for common diplomatic action in the event of war, there were no provisions in the Neutrality Declaration for backing their neutrality with force.

The events of the months following the signing of the Neutrality Declaration centered largely around Denmark because of this country's close proximity to Germany. At this time Finland was in the initial stages of the Aaland Islands remilitarization campaign, of which more will be said below. Norway's foreign policy was still based on the premise of British superiority at sea since the German navy was weaker at this time than it had been in 1914. Therefore, neither the political nor the military leaders of Norway held a German invasion of the country to be possible. Because of these factors Norway remained isolated from world events. Sweden was mainly concerned with providing for the maintenance of total neutrality in relation to supplying belligerents with raw materials in the event of war. To this end Sweden had considered allowing the export of iron ore to Germany and Britain in equal amounts during the Czechoslovak crisis of

¹⁹GD V No. 430.

League of Nations, League of Nations — Treaty Series, Vol. CLXXXVII — CLXXXVIII, 1938, p. 295.

September, 1938.²⁰ Berlin on several occasions stated its desire for a neutral north, uninvolved in the war that people were coming increasingly to expect. To this end, the German Foreign Ministry warned Scandinavia that the cordial situation between them might reverse if a Scandinavian country was to participate in a sanctions policy against Germany or if Scandinavian neutrality was violated by another belligerent.²¹ With war approaching rapidly the Scandinavian countries began to plan for mutual aid in foodstuffs and raw materials in war-time. It was their intention to try to get a single quota established for all the Northern countries from large producers of raw materials, so that the goods could then be freely apportioned among the four countries. But in these critical first months of Scandinavian neutrality the crucial events revolved around Denmark and her relationship with Germany.

The principle aim of Danish foreign policy at this point was to undertake nothing that might cause displeasure in Germany and increase the danger of a German attack. As will be remembered, the Danish Government had agreed to German overflights through the two Belts and the Sound with the implied concurrence of the British Government. That was in January before the signing of the Neutrality Declaration, the Danish note regarding German overflights was accepted, and the regulations incorporated into the Declaration. The affair appeared amiably settled. In August, however, three months after

²⁰GD V No. 463.

²¹Ibid., No. 448.

the signing of the Declaration and seven months after first having been informed of the overflights regulations, the British Government objected. There followed an exchange of notes, with Denmark, however, remaining adamant in her position. The Danes repeatedly stated that since no well-established rule on overflights existed, Denmark merely exercised her sovereign rights in the matter. As it was a minor point, and being aware of Denmark's precarious position with regard to Germany, the British Government allowed the matter to drop.

The principal conflict in Dano-German relations at this time remained the German ethnic minority in Denmark and the question of the acceptance of the frontier. Anxiety over North Schleswig first arose after the seizure of power in Germany by the Nazi Party, but subsequently subsided for a time. It was the orientation toward a Greater Germany, which was expressed in the reunion of Austria with Germany, that strengthened the apprehension that sometime in the future Germany would take up the question of North Schleswig. Within the German minority of North Schleswig impatience was growing. Over the years the German minority had been losing its numerical superiority in the region and, because of Nazi propaganda, a radical nationalist feeling was taking hold of the population with increasing determination.

Denmark's Foreign Minister, Munch, raised the question of Nordic help, in case Denmark's German minority clamored for independence, at the meeting of the Nordic Foreign Ministers at Oslo in the beginning of April, 1938. Denmark wanted moral support from the fellow Nordic States in a manner which would make it clear to Germany that all the

countries had an interest in the status quo of the Dano-German border. It soon became apparent, however, that the Nordic countries did not wish to give Denmark the desired moral support.²²

The border question was essentially a fear of the unknown. It was not thought there would be a direct German attack but rather some unknown change in the border regulations. It was feared that individual communes would vote to secede from Denmark although at the time there were only three small communes that had an outright German majority. However, the demands of the German minority could also take an unknown, and more radical, turn.

On April 12, 1938, the question of the German minority in Denmark was raised by its representative in the Folketing, Pastor Schmidt. In his speech, Schmidt revamped the history of the border settlement and said that the time had come for Denmark and Germany to discuss the whole issue of exactly where the border lay. Schmidt had attempted to bring about a resettlement of the border as early as 1936. At that time he had written to Ribbentrop asking that Germany attempt to bring North Schleswig into the German customs area or, at the least, obtain a lifting of certain import-export regulations for the area. At that time Germany had shown no interest in the question. Although he was a staunch nationalist and very much in favour of the reunion of North Schleswig with Germany, it does not appear that Pastor Schmidt made his Folketing speech at the behest of

²²Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, pp. 227-29.

the German Foreign Ministry, though there can be no doubt that Germany was in full accord with what he had said.²³ While the other Scandinavian countries were unwilling to give Denmark the official moral support which had been sought at Oslo in April, they did lend some unofficial aid. When Schmidt subsequently spoke with Foreign Minister Sandler of Sweden in June, the latter informed him that any pressure brought to bear on Denmark with the view of obtaining a rectification of the border would call forth strong suspicion of Germany in Sweden and the rest of Scandinavia. When Schmidt sought to speak with Foreign Minister Koht of Norway, Koht refused to receive him.²⁴

In the midst of Schmidt's endeavours to bring North Schleswig back to the Reich there occurred an interesting and somewhat comical intermezzo in Berlin. On May 17, the Danish author, Louis von Kohl, met with Grundherr of the German Foreign Ministry. Kohl told Grundherr he was in Berlin at the behest of Denmark's Chief of State Police, Thune Jacobsen, in an attempt to intercede on the behalf of the interned Austrian State Secretary for Security Forces, Skubl. Kohl wanted to use this opportunity to unofficially approach Berlin on the question of the Schleswig border. He stated that certain influential circles in Denmark were of the opinion that Denmark would agree to minor border rectifications if Germany in return agreed to declare the

²³Ibid., pp. 228-32.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 231-32.

border settlement final and guaranteed Denmark's integrity, including Greenland.²⁵ Kohl was of the belief that such influential members of the Danish Government as the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs could be won to such an agreement. The matter was referred to Renthe-Fink, the German Ambassador to Denmark, who reported that he did not think Kohl was a suitable middle man, nor did he think that the Prime Minister and the others could be brought around so easily. Here the matter should have ended. Two months later, however, Kohl made another attempt to act as an unofficial diplomat between the two countries. In the interview that followed Grundherr requested that Kohl no longer concern himself with the matter. At his trial in 1948, for collaboration with the Germans during the period of occupation, it became apparent that Kohl represented no named influential circles although he had been in contact with the various Cabinet members whom he had named. In other words, Kohl had acted on his own accord, hoping to gain importance as a middle man. The Kohl affair by itself is an insignificant part of the period, but deserves consideration as being representative of the many intrigues which took place at this time around the question of the Dano-German frontier. That Grundherr told Kohl not to concern himself with the matter any longer was an indication that Ribbentrop, who now controlled German foreign affairs, intended to let the North Schleswig question rest for the time being.²⁶

²⁵ Norway was at this time contesting Danish sovereignty over Greenland.

²⁶ Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, pp. 233-38.
GD V No. 433.

On September 26, Hitler made a speech at the Berlin Sportpalast stating that after the settlement of the Sudeten-German question there were no longer any territorial problems for Germany in Europe. In Denmark this speech was interpreted to mean that the Dano-German frontier was final. This interpretation was used by the Danes in order to get the German minority reconciled to the existing frontier. The leaders of the German minority did not take the Fuehrer's statement to be a recognition of the Dano-German frontier since there had been no negotiations between Berlin and Copenhagen and since they did not recognize the validity of the division of 1920.²⁷ In response to a query from the Danish Government, the German Foreign Ministry refused to interpret Hitler's words but ventured that he had not meant that the German Government had disinterested itself in the fate and treatment of Volksdeutsche on the German frontier.²⁸

There can be no doubt that the majority of the German minority in Denmark were staunch German nationalists desiring to return to the Reich. On the other hand, there does appear to be some indications that the Danish Government wilfully attempted to integrate the German minority into Danish society even to the extent of settling Danes in pockets of German majorities.

The area near the border where most of the German minority resided was largely agricultural but had been somewhat depressed in

²⁷GD V No. 454.

²⁸Ibid., No. 456.

recent years. Because of the economic plight in which the people found themselves they were often forced to carry a mortgage to prevent bankruptcy. In some instances mortgage institutions would no longer lend the money. Since many of the German landholdings now became threatened, the German Foreign Ministry set up a camouflaged agency called the Vereinigte Finanzkontore G.m.b.H. In 1936 this organization founded the Kreditanstalt Vogelgesang, a German financial institution, with a capital of 500,000 Danish Kroner as well as a considerable sum in the form of credit. The Kreditanstalt Vogelgesang, was given the task of covering the financial needs of farmers of German descent by means of loans in cases where Danish mortgages were no longer available. Owing to the increasingly deteriorating financial situation it became necessary to also take over impoverished farms in order to save them from seizure by the Danes. In spite of this precautionary tactic the German community in Denmark nonetheless lost 34,000 hectares of land from 1936 to 1938 -- the first two years of operation of the Kreditanstalt. Meanwhile, the Danish Government was carrying out a large-scale drainage project in the southern zone of North Schleswig, that is, the area with the heaviest German population, with the object of settling Danes on the reclaimed land. It was obvious that the German minority could not hope to win in the long run. Already there was a marked decline in the number of students attending the German schools; tradesmen were already known to have left for the more prosperous urban areas where there was no German minority of any note.²⁹ There was no doubt that Denmark attempted

²⁹Ibid., No. 462.

to incorporate the German minority into Danish society. This was bound to strengthen the feeling of chauvinistic nationalism among the German minority.

In 1938, and even as late as the early part of 1939, Scandinavia lay virtually unarmed with little or no action being taken to remedy the situation. Denmark particularly was in an unenviable position. Denmark's entire defence program had been built on the supposition that, because of her geographical position, a strong national defence was worse than none at all. A strong national defence would, it was believed, be an invitation for a German invasion or might invite the enemies of Germany to attempt to turn Denmark into a military base. Denmark was completely at the mercy of the good will of Germany. The vulnerability of Denmark exposed all of Scandinavia since the Danes obviously refused to close the invasion route that lay open to Germany. After the collapse of collective security through the League in 1936 the question of Danish defence had been brought up. At the time there was only the choice between a rapid and rational expansion, first and foremost of the navy's fundamental requirements, in order to close the military vacuum that existed, and the total surrender of a rational Danish defence. Denmark chose the latter alternative in spite of the mounting intelligence sources which, particularly towards the end of the thirties, had determined that the destinies of Norway and Denmark were very closely related in German naval circles. It was rapidly becoming apparent that the German naval leadership was interested in occupying both countries in order to utilize their territory for naval offensives against the British. Fully aware of the situation

as it existed, neither Denmark nor Norway chose to undertake action which might prevent the calamity which lay before them.³⁰

The situation in Norway was as dangerous as in Denmark. When Hitler assumed power in 1933 the defence budget increased from 35 million to 50 million kroner,³¹ and although there were subsequent increases in the military budget the country nonetheless remained very weakly defended. The problem of defence was intrinsically difficult because of the great distances, poor communications and small population. Nevertheless, Norway had been better defended in the First World War. The neglect of defence was by no means absolute. The military condition of Norway was the product of three main influences. First of all was the system of compulsory service dating back to the seventeenth century which acted as a symbol of independent nationhood but consisted of only thirteen weeks (which in practice had often been reduced to eight weeks). Norway enjoyed the enmity of Germany for having rewarded one of Hitler's concentration camp victims with the Nobel Peace Prize for 1936 and for having had the audacity to refuse to sign Germany's proposal for a non-aggression pact (of which more will be said in the following chapter). Finally, though aware of the need to protect their neutrality the Norwegians had established a weak neutrality watch in lieu of their former stronger neutrality defence of 1914-18.³²

³⁰Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, pp. 355-56.

³¹J. L. Moulton, The Norwegian Campaign of 1940, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966, p. 123.

³²T. K. Derry, The Campaign in Norway, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1953. p. 6.

After 1936, all the main parties in Sweden were agreed that the general danger of war was great, that Sweden might become involved in a European war, and that it was necessary to arm to meet the danger. This resulted in the decision to rearm and opened the way for a gradual build-up of Sweden's defences. As the tenseness of the world situation increased so did the increase in Sweden's defence expenditures. In Finland, the situation was very much the same as in Sweden. The country prepared to arm itself against any aggression. There was, however, one notable difference: Sweden, as a nation, was considerably richer than Finland and therefore spent substantial sums on rearmament. The Finnish Government, while recognizing the gravity of the world situation, was unwilling to expend the needed sums to prepare the country fully. Had Finnish rearmament been undertaken the country would have been in a better position to repel the Red Army though the equipment used might have been outdated.

CHAPTER II

Scandinavian Cooperation and Events up to the Outbreak of World War II

In the two decades following World War I, political and diplomatic relations between the northern countries were limited to cooperation in the League of Nations and profitable conventions for compulsory arbitration of disputes. Economic cooperation lagged till 1930 when the depression forced Scandinavia to try the Oslo Bloc convention in cooperation with the Benelux countries. The Bloc attempted an economic integration on a small scale, but competition and restrictions on free international trade largely thwarted this effort. However, this initial attempt at cooperation between the Scandinavian States (and Benelux countries) in both economic and political areas constituted a first step towards creating a definite ideal of Scandinavian cooperation.

Briefly, the various Scandinavian discussions between 1933 and 1938 for the purpose of cooperation may be summed up by saying that the general declarations in favour of agreement and cooperation — both official and unofficial — grew more and more numerous and vehement while concrete proposals and discussions towards specific goals were eagerly discussed among the public at large but only very rarely referred to by responsible politicians. The positive attitude towards cooperation seems to have been strongest in Finland to the extent that she saw in Sweden her only hope of salvation from Russian domination. In Denmark the question of a Scandinavian alliance was raised sporadically but the political leaders of the country definitely rejected the idea of any close cooperation. Stauning, the Prime

Minister, stated that the interests of the Scandinavian States were too divergent for any alliance between them to be possible and expressed his opinion that a Scandinavian alliance was a Utopia and would only create fresh areas of conflict.¹ In Stauning's eyes, a closer association with Scandinavia was bound to increase the danger of a German attack. Interest in a closer political association was probably weakest in Norway. She, unlike Finland and Denmark, did not appear to be exposed to any outside danger. Memories of the Union of Norway and Sweden and differences with Denmark over Greenland had an inhibiting effect. Likewise, there was no threat to Norway from the west and she felt herself insulated from all other approaches by the other Scandinavian countries. In any Scandinavian cooperation, Sweden would have to play the central part. This was because Sweden had started reorganizing her defences under the pressure of international events and was the only Scandinavian State having a military establishment of any real importance. Both Finland and Denmark might possibly obtain support from Sweden, but not from each other; Norway, of course, felt sufficiently safe facing the Atlantic. As on earlier occasions, there could be no possibility of bringing the Scandinavian countries together except with Sweden as the central core.

Apart from military cooperation which dominated a large proportion of the various talks held by the Scandinavian Foreign Ministers there were other areas in which attempt at cooperation were

¹Tingsten, Debate, p. 225. The statement was made on March 8, 1937, at Lund, Denmark.

made and in which some success was realized. In the ten years before the war Scandinavian cooperation had achieved some notable successes. Common Nordic laws had been introduced which covered marriage, adoption, elections, public assembly, inheritance and death. The application of individual Nordic countries' insurance schemes to one of the other countries was introduced in 1937.²

An attempt was made by Foreign Minister Munch of Denmark to establish political cooperation after the September crisis of 1938. A note suggesting a meeting of the Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of the four Scandinavian countries and Iceland was favorably received by all except the Norwegians who thought such large meetings would be inefficient. Under Norwegian pressure Sweden and Finland also became uneasy about the plan and it was shelved. Henceforth, political cooperation was only carried out in the Foreign Ministers' meetings that were held at regular intervals. Although this cooperation had, of course, existed to some extent throughout the interwar years, it was hoped that by having both the Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of the various countries meet together it would be possible to take a stronger and more unified position in the crucial events taking place at this time.³

Economic cooperation stemmed from the Foreign Ministers' meeting of 1934. In its development this cooperation took the form of

²Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, pp. 264-65.

³Ibid., pp. 267-68.

the use of a common Nordic customs declaration, communications cooperation, and unity in international exhibitions. Economic cooperation never became geared to strengthening the Scandinavian economy for the eventuality of war, in fact, the last meeting of the economic experts was held in September, 1938. The next meeting should have been held the following year but was postponed, because of the outbreak of war, till January of 1940 when it was again postponed because of the Russo-Finnish war. The only success of the talks held on economic cooperation was the decision to establish the mechanics for the exchange of goods under 'difficult conditions', that is, in the event of war. It was agreed that each country would supply the others with what it specialized in. Accordingly, Denmark was to supply the rest of Scandinavia with food stuffs, Norway was to supply fertilizer and saltpeter, Sweden to supply iron and steel, and Finland to supply wood and paper. It was hoped that arrangements could be made with the U.S.A. to provide oil, coal, textiles, metals, corn, and animal fodder. At the beginning of the war in September, 1939, the difficulties and almost complete lack of forethought became apparent. At the meeting held in Stockholm in response to the outbreak of war it became apparent that the Nordic countries had invoked export restrictions on many of the goods that were to be interchanged. During all the Foreign Ministers' meetings that were held from August, 1936, to September 1939, the question of goods exchange under war conditions had been discussed repeatedly but now, under actual war conditions, the matter was suddenly dropped. No reason was given, but the matter

was no longer mentioned in the Foreign Ministers' meetings that took place between September, 1939 and April, 1940.⁴

Nordic military cooperation had adherents both in Finland and in Sweden, and to a certain extent, also in Denmark. Both Finland and Denmark had threatened frontiers: Finland against Russia and Denmark against Germany. This meant, however, that the only two Scandinavian countries to feel themselves threatened had no common strategic interests. The neighbour threatening Denmark was Germany, but conversely, Germany was the logical ally of Finland in case of conflict between Finland and the state threatening her, that is, Russia. This was the dilemma of Scandinavian military cooperation: who was to be regarded as the enemy? The enemy of one country was the ally of the other. Sweden, was in the middle and had difficulty deciding which of Germany or the Soviet Union she should fear the most while Norway, facing the Atlantic, felt sufficiently far away from both to be largely uninterested in military cooperation.

Some attempts were, however, made to form some sort of defensive alliance. An early suggestion for an alliance was one under which the Scandinavian States would promise to send their combined forces to the aid of any of their number which was attacked. This, however, would have the unfortunate consequence of a country becoming embroiled in a war in which it had no strategic interests

⁴Ibid., pp. 268-72.

whatsoever, or worse yet, a country might be forced to fight someone which it may one day have to rely on as an ally against aggression towards itself (such would be the case if Finland had to fight on behalf of Denmark against Germany). Another suggestion, and one that was partly realized, was for two or more States to join forces for the defence of certain limited areas such as the Aaland Islands, the 'calotte' — the most northern parts of Sweden, Norway and Finland approximately down to the Polar Circle — and the Sound. In the latter case it would probably be a question of building coastal fortifications to enable the entrance to the Sound to be closed. In fact, there was some attempt at military cooperation over the question of the Sound though this was largely restricted to joint black-out procedures in Copenhagen and across the Sound in Sweden. Finally, there was the question of cooperation on certain forms of military preparation. Here the proposals ranged from the extreme demand of combining the air forces and navies of the Scandinavian States, to the modest measures of help and cooperation in obtaining essential supplies, possibly even war materials proper, air raid precautions and so forth. To this end, some talks about closer coordination of weapons existed between Norway and Sweden with Denmark asked to join in, but these appear to have been rather unfruitful. There also existed an agreement between Denmark and Sweden to keep each other informed about foreign ships and planes off their respective coasts.⁵

⁵Tingsten, Debate, p. 231.
Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, p. 266.

Because so many proposals were offered without being followed through there was actually little hope for any effective Scandinavian military cooperation. Furthermore, Sweden was the only country which was willing, and had the resources, to rearm herself in such a manner as to serve as a possible deterrent against aggression.

By the outbreak of the World War and in the months that followed it became apparent that Scandinavian cooperation since 1933 had been governed by self-interest. In none of the vital areas were the countries prepared to make the sacrifices that were needed if the objectives were to be realized. Only in the cultural, social and juristic areas had results been achieved. The situation as it existed was perhaps best expressed by a Swedish newspaper when it wrote in 1937, "Scandinavia is a geographical, perhaps a poetical, but not a political entity."⁶

There was only one instance where real Scandinavian military cooperation appeared to be working but this flicker of hope was extinguished all too soon and in a most unfortunate manner. This was the question of the remilitarization of the Aaland Islands and was unrelated to the talks of military cooperation that were taking place in the Scandinavian capitals at that time.

By the Aaland Islands Convention in 1921, the crowning achievement of the League of Nations, the islands had been awarded to the Finns on the stipulation that they remain unfortified and be granted self-government.

⁶Tingsten, Debate, p. 237.

The strategic importance of the Aaland Islands lay in the fact that, lying between Finland and Sweden, they dominated the entrance to the west coast of Finland and Northern Sweden. The islands almost entirely protected the approaches to the Gulf of Bothnia and with their fortifications, the Finnish west and Swedish east coasts would be protected. Because of the strategic value of the islands it was likely that either belligerent in a Russo-German war might wish to seize them as a base for operations. This did not, in fact, happen because of subsequent Soviet policy towards Finland: in attempting to guarantee that the Germans would not get the Aaland Islands, Russian diplomacy ensured that the Germans would get the whole of Finland instead.

Foreign Minister Sandler of Sweden instigated the Aaland Islands talks in 1935 when he first urged the Finnish and Swedish Governments to remilitarize the islands. About the end of 1937 and the beginning of 1938, discussion on the Aaland question became serious, and a few months later secret negotiations were opened between the Swedish and Finnish Governments. What had brought about this sudden resurgence in the question two years after Sandler had first attempted to get the Swedish and Finnish Governments interested? It was a combination of circumstances: the bankruptcy of the system of collective security certainly played its part; the danger of war between the Great Powers was expected over the mounting Czechoslovak crisis; Finland's Scandinavian orientation was governed to a large extent by the hope for an alliance with Sweden;

the strengthening of the Swedish defence forces placed that country in a position in which she could undertake certain more broad defence measures. In April, 1938, the actual negotiations on the Aaland question began between Sweden and Finland on Finnish initiative. In May and again in July discussions took place in Stockholm between the two Foreign Ministers and their respective staffs. At the latter meeting agreement was reached on the most important points, and the proposals were worked out which served as a basis for the Bill presented to the Swedish Riksdag in the spring of 1939. The subjects and progress of the negotiations were kept secret throughout.

It had been presumed that the remilitarization of the islands was to be directed against the Russians who were the natural and closest enemy of the Finns, but by late 1938, while the Finnish and Swedish Governments and respective General Staffs were negotiating, it became apparent that the Aaland problem was undergoing a transformation. It was becoming obvious that the Russian danger was no longer playing a great role in Swedish politics. In Finland, the Russian danger was still exploited by the Government and the military, but the leading men no longer believed in the threat.⁷ The Swedes were making no secret of the fact that they regarded Germany especially as a presumptive aggressor.

Since the Aaland agreements of 1921 were an international convention, the signatory nations would have to be consulted before any changes could be undertaken in the status of the islands. Germany,

⁷GD V No. 458.

being one of the signatories, rightly saw that when asked she would be requested nothing less than the consent to remilitarization of the islands against herself! To add further cause to German worries, newspapers were beginning to hint that a number of small skerries lying between the Swedish mainland and the Aaland Islands group would also be fortified. Since these skerries were part of Sweden and not governed by the Aaland Islands Convention these were not subject to the approval of any foreign country. Should these skerries and the Aaland Islands be fortified, they would dominate entirely the Kvarken Strait which governed the Gulf of Bothnia.

The result of all this was that Finland and Sweden could, in war-time, effectively shut off the Gulf of Bothnia. Since much of Swedish and Finnish exports of natural resources stemmed from harbours located in this Gulf, the effective creation of a Finno-Swedish 'mare nostrum' could have adverse repercussions on Germany in time of war, depending on the political alignment at the time.

On September 8, 1938, the first public announcement regarding the Aaland talks was made by the Foreign Ministers in both countries. Sandler, in Sweden, stated that the question was not a matter of renouncing the Aaland Islands Convention of 1921; the demilitarized status of the islands was not in doubt. The question centered on a modification in the Convention. The southern boundary of the demilitarized zone would have to be redefined to allow military installations of some kind to be established there. Secondly, the demilitarization regulations for the remainder of the Aaland region must be relaxed so as to permit the establishment of anti-aircraft guns and

coastal batteries. It was emphatically stated that the Aaland Islands would not be used for military operations and so would not infringe the international inviolability of the region. They would have unpleasant consequences only for someone approaching the islands for unlawful purposes. Sandler repeatedly emphasized how vital it was that the Aaland Islands, in the event of war, should not fall into the hands of a Great Power.⁸ On November 8, having been slightly modified, the Aaland plans were broadcast on the radio. The modification proposed that certain islands and skerries in the southern part of the group should be entirely excluded from the demilitarized zone and that Finland should be free to erect there whatever defensive installations she deemed to be necessary. In the remainder of the zone, military preparations of a defensive nature, including the stationing of troops, anti-aircraft defences, coastal artillery, et cetera, should be allowed for a period of ten years. Fortifications in the full sense of the term should not be erected. Plans were in existence for joint Swedish-Finnish intervention on the Aaland Islands themselves in the event of war for the defence of the islands and because it was vital to the neutrality of the two countries.⁹

While the official statements of the Finnish and Swedish Governments specified that only the southerⁿ skerries of the Aaland Islands group would be fortified, "one should not lose sight of the possibility," German Ambassador Bluecher in Helsinki warned his Government, "that

⁸Tingsten, Debate, pp. 247-48

⁹Ibid., p. 249.

once the signatory powers have consented to fortifications of the Aaland Islands the thought of extending the fortifications to the Kvarken Strait will also gain ground in official quarters".¹⁰

Bluecher therefore suggested that, should consent to remilitarization be given, it be given on condition that the Kvarken Strait not be closed.¹¹

At a Foreign Office conference held at the beginning of 1939, the German Government decided that while, in the eyes of the Swedes, the proposed Aaland Islands fortifications were primarily directed against themselves, it was still in Germany's interest to give consent since it would safeguard the islands against a possible seizure by the Soviet Union. But it was nevertheless felt that Sweden should be made to make certain assurances that ore deliveries on a peacetime level would be maintained in case of war and that the ore shipments be protected, particularly in the Gulf of Bothnia. The German Government was also worried about Swedish troops possibly being used to defend the islands. But above all else, since the Germans themselves were not planning any action in that area of the Baltic, or in the Aaland Islands specifically, they thought it of the utmost importance that the islands remain neutralized.¹²

On January 26, 1939, the Swedish and Finnish Ambassadors in the capitals of the countries which were signatories to the Aaland

¹⁰GD V No. 458.

¹¹The Kvarken Strait lies to the west of the Aaland Islands in Swedish territorial waters.

¹²GD V No. 460.

Islands Convention of 1921 extended a demarche to the Governments to which they were accredited.¹³ These identical notes stated that Finland and Sweden were in agreement as follows: the neutral character of the islands was to be maintained, but de-militarization, on the other hand, was to be curtailed; Finland was to have complete freedom for military defence measures in the southern part; in the northern part of the zone she was to have certain defensive rights for ten years; in the event of war, Sweden, at Finnish request, would also be able to take part in the defensive measures; no other nation would have the right to intervene by armed force to protect the neutrality of the islands.¹⁴ The notes also stated that the proposals had been considered necessary because of "the weakening of the League of Nations security system and the present political and military difficulties in applying the guarantee system provided for in the 1921 Convention."¹⁵ However, the League of Nations guarantee, incorporated in Articles VI and VII of the Convention, was to be preserved. A demarche, similar to that handed the Convention signatories, was extended to Moscow.

In answer to their demarches the Swedes and Finns found their greatest difficulty arising from the Russians through London and Paris. The Soviet Union contended that there existed a secret agreement between Finland and Germany providing for the islands being turned over

¹³Britain, France, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia Latvia, Poland and Italy. The Soviet Union was not included since it was not a member of the League of Nations at that time. Moscow was later invited to sign but declined.

¹⁴GD VI No. 145.

¹⁵Tingsten, Debate, p. 250.

to the Germans in an emergency. London, nevertheless, promised an affirmative reply while Paris declined to make any prompt statement. All the small nations bordering on the Baltic approved of the fortifications promptly and unconditionally. The Soviet Union made her consent dependent on Finnish agreement to the leasing of certain islands in the Gulf of Finland, islands which guarded the approaches to Leningrad. This proposed trade was part of a longer series of negotiations between Finland and the Soviet Union and will be dealt with in greater detail below.

Germany and Italy were the last countries to reply. In view of the German Foreign Office conference held in January, 1939, mentioned above, the German delay was difficult to understand. Perhaps part of the answer lies in the antagonism existing between Germany and the League of Nations. Since the original convention was under the aegis of the League and since the Finns and Swedes intended to submit their proposals for the approval of the Council of the League of Nations, Germany, in fact, felt that she would be recognizing the competence of that organization. Finally, on April 12, the Germans gave their answer. But all was not well. Weizsaecker, the German State Secretary, informed the Swedish Ambassador that the German reply had been delayed because of their reserve over the competence of the League and, secondly, over the question of Sweden. It was felt, Weizsaecker stated, that the right to military defence measures should be accorded solely to Finland under whose sovereignty the islands lay. He went on to say that Germany was somewhat reserved in according special rights in the islands to Sweden without

being assured of that country's attitude in the event of war. Weizsaecker therefore suggested that the Swedish Government give the Germans a note to the effect that Sweden would ensure that the normal Swedish exports to Germany suffer no prejudice in the event of war.¹⁶

About a week later the Swedes replied. They were unwilling to make the proposed statement but would follow explicitly their previous statements regarding their neutrality. Attempts would be made to maintain a pre-war level of exports but circumstances might warrant changes as a result of war which were as yet unforeseen and, therefore, Sweden refused to tie her hands. The Germans reserved a final answer saying it was their hope that some declaration, corresponding to both German and Swedish wishes, could be worked out.¹⁷

This German stand of demanding a note guaranteeing their ore supply was, of course, in accordance with the position taken during the Foreign Ministry conference of January, 1939. However, in their negotiations with the Swedes, the Germans appeared to be stressing the note too strongly. It seemed they had lost sight of the important fact that the remilitarization of the Aaland Islands was in their own strategic interest as was also pointed out at the January conference. It was of the utmost importance for the Germans to keep the islands out of the hands of the Soviet Union which, with possession of the islands, would control a large, and important, segment of the ore shipments from Sweden.¹⁸

¹⁶GD VI No. 187.

¹⁷Ibid., No. 229.

¹⁸GD V No. 460.

With the desired neutrality of the Aaland Islands in mind, the Germans proposed a new note on April 21 that the Swedes were to give to the Germans. The phrasing of this note was decidedly milder. It merely stated that the Swedish Government would conduct her foreign trade policy in a manner appropriate to the preservation of her alleged neutrality.¹⁹ The Swedish Ambassador in Berlin stated that he believed his Government would accept this formula.

On May 2, 1939, Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, sent a note to the Finnish Ambassador in Berlin giving German consent to the fortifications. This note also stated that Germany assumed that Finland and Sweden would remain neutral in the event of an outbreak of hostilities.²⁰ But it was all in vain.

It had previously been decided that the change in the Convention of 1921 would be brought before the Council of the League of Nations to give voice to 'interested' parties, meaning the Soviet Union. Britain and France thought this would be necessary for any changes in the Convention to be meaningful. This was a courtesy to the League but a disastrous decision. All the signatories to the Convention had by this time agreed to the change in the status of the Aaland Islands. The Soviet Union, which was not a signatory, was asked to give assent by way of its membership in the League and thus appease British and French Reserves.

¹⁹GD VI No. 242.

²⁰Ibid., No. 312.

On May 27, in Geneva, the rapporteur appointed by the League Council announced that the Aaland Islands Convention could be legally amended without a decision by the League of Nations as long as the signatories were in agreement.²¹ In spite of this, the Russian delegate, who happened to be chairman of the Council, asked for the question to be postponed. He further stated that Russia would vote against the proposal since the extent of the fortifications were not clear and they might be used by an aggressive Power against the Soviet Union.²² The next day Molotov reminded the world of Russia's historical rights in the islands and stated categorically that Russia had not agreed to anything in Geneva and therefore the question was not settled. It is quite possible, now that the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations were just getting under way, that Molotov's attitude was influenced by the Soviet Union's need to prove to Britain by this procedure that the Red Army was still an active military factor whose power must be respected.

But perhaps more important, Molotov's speech had the purpose of frightening off Sweden. In hostile terms, Molotov had asserted that Sweden had no privileges under the 1921 Convention; in fact, the remilitarization was of more interest to the Soviet Union than to Sweden which had not the historical rights that Russia enjoyed. Molotov's speech had the desired effect. On June 1, the Swedish Government withdrew the Bill requesting the Riksdag to implement the Aaland scheme. In withdrawing the Aaland remilitarization Bill

²¹Max Jakobson, The Diplomacy of the Winter War, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 74 - 75.

²²Tingsten, Debate, pp. 266-67.

the Swedish Government gave the explanation that in view of various unforeseen circumstances, it had now become necessary to postpone preliminary discussions of the matter.²³

At this stage one must remember that Sweden had first favored the remilitarization of the Aaland Islands as a deterrent against Germany, not the Soviet Union, and one can, perhaps, understand Sweden's fear of having two great neighbours as potential aggressors. But, unfortunately, Swedish withdrawal left Finland to face the Soviet Union by herself. The Russians had tested Scandinavian unity and had seen it bend under stress. The irony of the affair was, however, that Sweden had withdrawn from the Aaland agreement because the Swedes were not prepared to commit themselves to defend the Aaland Islands without the consent of the only Powers against whom there was any question of having to defend the islands.

The following July, Molotov informed the Finnish Ambassador in Moscow that the Soviet Government claimed equal rights with Sweden in giving assistance in the defence of the islands should Finland request it.²⁴ Needless to say, the Finns declined the offer.

Running almost parallel in time to the Aaland Islands remilitarization talks were the Soviet overtures to Finland in an attempt to provide adequate defences for Leningrad.

Before the final negotiations leading to the outbreak of

²³Tingsten, Debate, p. 267.

²⁴GD VI No. 612.

the Finno-Soviet war, talks between the two countries occurred in three phases. The first phase was under Yartsev, a junior member of the Russian Embassy in Helsinki, in the spring of 1938 and called for the right of the Soviet Union to fortify the Finnish islands in the Gulf of Finland, phase two took place at the end of 1938 in Moscow and called for the cession of the islands by Finland to the Soviet Union. Stein, the Russian Ambassador in Rome, conducted the third phase which first called for a thirty-year lease of the islands and later proposed a trade of territory.

The first of these three phases began on April 14, 1938, when Holsti, the Finnish Foreign Minister, was asked by Yartsev for a meeting. In the meetings that followed the Soviet fears unfolded. The Soviet Government, Yartsev began, was convinced that Nazi-Germany was planning an attack on the Soviet Union which included plans for using Finland as a northern base of aggression. If this was to occur, the Red Army would advance into Finland to meet the Germans and Finland would become a battleground between two great military powers. If Finland, however, was to accept Soviet help such aid would be forthcoming and, Yartsev added, the Soviet Union would undertake to withdraw its troops from Finland as soon as the war was over. Holsti attempted to allay the fears of the Soviet envoy. Regarding specifics, however, Yartsev was extremely vague, giving the impression that it was hoped that Finland would take the first official step towards true negotiations. Nevertheless, it was apparent that Russia was hoping to transform Finland from a neutral neighbour into an allied state.²⁵

²⁵Jakobson, Diplomacy, pp. 7-10

Soviet fears over Finland were understandable. Leningrad was but a short distance from the Finnish frontier and the Russians were naturally concerned over its safety. Accordingly, Yartsev continually asked Finland for guarantees that she would not join Germany in a future war against Russia.

In July, 1938, Finland thought she had reached a point where Russia could be assured of Finnish neutrality. At that time the Finno-Swedish negotiations for the remilitarization of the Aaland Islands were seriously getting under way for the first time. The Swedes, of course, were insisting on Soviet approval for the remilitarization. The Finns saw this as an opportunity to solve two problems at once. It was thought these two items would support each other. In other words, in return for Russian consent to the fortification of the Aaland Islands the Swedes could act as chaperones of Finnish neutrality and independence.²⁶ To this end a draft treaty was submitted to Yartsev.

The proposed treaty did not meet with Soviet approval but, as Finland had now taken an official step towards negotiations with the Russians, a return memorandum proposed that Finland issue a note stating her desire to resist German aggression and acceptance of Soviet military assistance.²⁷ At this point Moscow also stated that it would agree to remilitarization of the Aaland Islands on the condition that Russia take part therein; it was implied that Sweden would have no part

²⁶Ibid., p. 41.

²⁷Ibid., p. 42.

in the fortification to be undertaken. In addition, the Soviet Union demanded the right to establish an air and naval base on the island of Hogland (Suursaari) in the Gulf of Finland. Needless to say, the Soviet proposal was rejected out of hand as violating Finland's stated aim of pursuing a policy of strict neutrality.

The second phase of the Finno-Soviet talks took place in Moscow in December, 1938. At that time two high officials of the Finnish Foreign Ministry went to Moscow for trade conversations with the Soviet Government. They were instructed to refrain from discussions centering on military cooperation on the grounds that this was politically unacceptable in Finland at that time. In the Finnish view, trade relations had to be improved considerably before political relations could be changed. In Moscow the two Finnish envoys met with Mikoyan, Commissar for Foreign Trade and member of the Politburo. At these meetings, Mikoyan spoke incessantly of the need for the Finns to cede Hogland to the Russians in order to protect Leningrad while the Finns spoke incessantly of the needs to fortify the Aaland Islands. Throughout, the Russians stressed that Finnish neutrality would not suffice if she was attacked. As for the original purpose of the trip, no trade agreement was made.²⁸

It seems never to have occurred to either side at this stage to undertake a barter deal. No attempt was made then, or later, with the view of sacrificing Hogland in return for Soviet agreement to the remilitarization of the Aaland Islands. Since the Aaland scheme in

²⁸ John H. Wuorinen, A History of Finland, New York, Columbia University Press, 1965, p. 311.

no way endangered Russian security it was perhaps thought that no concessions need be given to obtain Soviet assent. Also, one might ask whether such an agreement would have been politically acceptable in Finland where there was still concern for the Karelians who found themselves under Soviet administration.

During March of 1939, the third and final stage of the Finno-Soviet talks took place. These new talks had begun in February with a Soviet offer to reopen trade talks. A Finnish delegation had gone to Moscow with high hopes of obtaining a trade agreement but nothing developed.²⁹ Finally, at the beginning of March, Litvinov, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, was ready to begin bargaining.

Stein, the Soviet Ambassador in Rome, who had previously been stationed in Helsinki, was sent to Finland to undertake the negotiations. The new proposals were a Soviet lease for thirty years of Hogland and four smaller islands in the Gulf of Finland. These were to be used as naval observation posts along the approaches to Leningrad. In return, the Russians offered part of Soviet Karelia and it was hinted that agreement might also be reached on the Aaland question.³⁰ Erkko, who had replaced Holsti as Foreign Minister the previous December, did not feel competent to negotiate about frontiers since the Finnish Constitution stated that Finland was 'indivisible'. Furthermore, Erkko stated that leasing the islands to the Soviet Union would obviously compromise Finnish neutrality. Finland again restated her neutrality which Stein brushed aside as a worthless piece of paper.

²⁹Jakobson, Diplomacy, p. 62.

³⁰Ibid., p. 63.

Again there was no trade agreement reached; it was apparent that talk of trade was only a cover for political negotiations and that Russian trade followed Russia's Red Army.

It was unfortunate that Finland followed such a rigid foreign policy. A more flexible policy might have been able to satisfy Russia's natural, and justifiable, apprehension concerning the security of Leningrad. Marshal Mannerheim, who was Chairman of the Finnish Defence Council, suggested at the time that the Government agree to the Russian proposal. The islands, he pointed out, had no strategic value for Finland but were of immense importance to the Russians. Furthermore, the islands could not be defended in time of war. Possibly anticipating the Russians, Mannerheim also suggested that the frontier on the Karelian Isthmus be moved further to the north so as to further allay Soviet fears over Leningrad.³¹ Mannerheim felt that this was indeed a small price to pay to win Soviet good will, particularly with regard to the Aaland question.

As the Finno-Soviet talks neared their conclusion there arose the question of non-aggression pacts between the Scandinavian States and Germany.

The German offer of non-aggression pacts with the Scandinavian and other States arose out of a speech made by President Roosevelt of the United States on April 15, 1939. In his speech, Roosevelt called on Hitler (and Mussolini) to give assurance that their armed forces

³¹Gustav Mannerheim, The Memoirs of Marshal Mannerheim, London, Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1953, pp. 299-301.

would not attack or invade some thirty-odd European and Middle Eastern States, of which the first listed was Finland.³² This caused a storm in the German press. Hitler asked the German diplomats in the countries named in Roosevelt's speech to ask their hosts whether they feared a German attack and whether Roosevelt had asked them about such an attack prior to his speech. The four Nordic States answered 'no' to both questions. Some apprehension about German intentions did nonetheless arise in the Scandinavian countries and Denmark went so far as to recall her military class of 1938 which had only recently been disbanded. On April 28, Hitler answered Roosevelt in a speech in which he said that, "all States bordering on Germany have received binding assurances and, above all, more binding proposals than Mr. Roosevelt asks from me in his curious telegram."³³ These 'binding proposals' referred to offers of non-aggression pacts.

The Finnish Government agreed in principle to a non-aggression pact although its repercussions on Finland's neutrality were not clear; the Government would have to wait and see how such a pact would be received by the Scandinavian countries. With regard to Finland, the German Foreign Ministry was drawing the parallel that since the country already had a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union (dating from 1932), a similar undertaking with Germany would merely strengthen Finnish neutrality. In Denmark the proposal of the German non-aggression pact was interpreted to mean a German recog-

³²BD V No. 180.

³³GD VI No. 284. Roosevelt's speech was sent by telegraph to Hitler and Mussolini.

dition of the Dano-German border. It was felt that Britain and France could not object since Denmark's participation in the League of Nations implied a non-aggression pact with the various members. In Berlin, about the same time, Danish Admiral Rechnitzer and Lieutenant-General With were personally assured by Hitler that, "Germany under no circumstances intends to encroach on Denmark's neutrality."³⁴

Norway was against the offer. Norway's Foreign Minister, Dr. Koht, wrote in 1941 that the proposed non-aggression pact "might seem alluring to nations which were anxious to keep out of war ... But the Norwegian Government remembered that the non-aggression treaty concluded by Poland with Germany had been regarded as the beginning of a German orientation on the part of Poland, and they felt that their accepting the German offer might be interpreted in the same way."³⁵ But the greatest opposition to the proposed non-aggression pact came from Sweden's Foreign Minister Sandler.

The Scandinavian Foreign Ministers met in Stockholm on May 9 at Sandler's invitation. There was never much hope for Scandinavian unity on the question of the proposed non-aggression pacts. Sandler emphasized that both the Swedish Government and its official Opposition in the Riksdag felt that Sweden could not sign any non-aggression pact with Germany since this would be a departure from traditional Swedish foreign policy.³⁶ Erkko was won over to the opposition because an aspect of the German-Estonian Non-Aggression Pact, which

³⁴Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, p. 283.

³⁵Halvdan Koht, Norway, Neutral and Invaded, New York, The MacMillan Co., 1941, p. 14.

³⁶Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, p. 289.

would be the model for the Nordic pacts, stated that any aid whatsoever to a third power was not allowed. This could be interpreted to also mean moral support or economic aid, a restriction that was intolerable to the Scandinavian States.³⁷ Sandler's principal objections to the German-Estonian treaty were: its short duration — after the expiration of the treaty Germany would not be prevented from attacking; the fact that a non-aggression pact was not in keeping with existing neutrality (if it was, it would be superfluous; if not, then unacceptable); the obligations not to support Germany's opponents may be interpreted to mean that the signatories could only trade with Germany in the event of war, and; the fact that a non-aggression treaty with a Great Power would encroach upon Scandinavian sovereignty.³⁸ The Germans answered that the duration of the treaty could be extended indefinitely, that the non-aggression treaties were in harmony with neutrality, that no restrictions would be made against trade with both sides in case of war, and that steps taken towards non-aggression could not possibly prejudice Scandinavian sovereignty.³⁹ In spite of this attempt of the Germans to allay the fears of the Scandinavian States, Finland, Norway, and Sweden declined to sign any non-aggression pacts.

With Denmark the situation was entirely different. When the non-aggression pacts had first been proposed England had decided not to take any position against the acceptance by the Nordic countries

³⁷Loc.cit.

³⁸GD VI No. 358.

³⁹Ibid., No. 365.

save to stipulate that such would not be consistent with true neutrality. However, even England was urging Denmark to sign the non-aggression pact because of her peculiar geographical position.⁴⁰ When the other Nordic countries decided to reject the German offer Denmark pleaded with them not to abandon her in this critical moment, fearing that if she alone entered negotiations Germany might raise the border question; such a situation would not develop if all the Nordic Countries entered negotiations together. It was to no avail. In view of the other Nordic countries' decision to reject the German offer some of the Danish political leaders felt that perhaps Denmark should follow suit, if only in order to maintain Scandinavian solidarity.⁴¹ It was feared that Denmark's signing with Germany would show that Scandinavian unity was weak, leading to questionings of its reliability in a major crisis. But Foreign Minister Munch stood firm: a rejection of the German offer would be remembered and if Germany had any cause for feeling apprehensive about Denmark she would probably attempt to secure her position in time of war by occupying the country.⁴² At no time was there any illusion about the true worth of such a non-aggression pact with Germany. There was a total awareness that the pact would only exist as long as it was convenient for Germany but it was believed that should the offer be rejected Denmark would find herself in worse jeopardy than if she signed. Munch was invited to come to Berlin for

⁴⁰Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, p. 292.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 290-90.

⁴²Ibid. p. 291.

the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact but declined because of the hostility toward the Pact in Denmark. Therefore, the Danish Ambassador to Germany, Herluf Zahle, signed with Ribbentrop on May 31. The ratification was exchanged on June 24, 1939.⁴³

While Germany was attempting to obtain non-aggression pacts with the Scandinavian countries, the Russians were striving to come to terms with the Anglo-French bloc. It was the hope of the British, French and the Russians that they might come to a working agreement for the containment of Nazi Germany. In striving for this the Russians hoped to use Anglo-French prestige to make inroads into Finland and the Baltic States through offers of aid against aggression. Accordingly, on April 17 the Soviet Union issued a statement to the effect that Russia pledged herself to aid any victim of aggression, but only at the request of the country concerned and in a manner acceptable to it.⁴⁴ The statement had been issued at the behest of Prime Minister Chamberlain of Great Britain and was to be one of the preparatory political moves which were to culminate in the Anglo-French-Soviet talks concerning the formation of an alliance.⁴⁵ The date of the statement was important for another reason. On that day the Russian Ambassador in Berlin went to the German Foreign Ministry to explain that ideological differences need not prevent the establishment of normal rela-

⁴³GD VI No. 461.
Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, p. 295.

⁴⁴Jakobson, Diplomacy, p. 67.

⁴⁵Loc. Cit.

tions between the Soviet Union and Germany.⁴⁶ This approach to Germany was eventually to result in the Nazi-Soviet Pact which made war virtually inevitable. Less than two weeks after this same crucial date, on April 28, Hitler was to offer his non-aggression pacts to the Scandinavian States. That month of April and the Anglo-French-Soviet talks that followed were to prove crucial to Finland.

On the same date that the Soviet statement was issued the British Minister in Helsinki sent a telegram to London advising that a Soviet offer of assistance would not have a reassuring effect but rather the reverse in Finland. He also correctly prophesied that such an undertaking would likely pave the way for a similar offer from Germany.⁴⁷ Within a few days the Soviet Union broadcast yet another offer of assistance to neighbouring states whereupon the Finnish Foreign Minister expressed his belief that the Russians were in greater need of help than any of their neighbours.⁴⁸ Notes were given to the Estonian and Latvian, but not the Finnish, Governments. The notes stated that the Soviet Union would find it intolerable if these two countries were to enter into agreement, whether voluntarily or under pressure, with a third power. No one doubted that the 'third power' referred to Germany and that 'intolerable' was interpreted to mean intervention. Finland, however, was not

⁴⁶GD VI No. 215.

⁴⁷BD V No. 195.

⁴⁸Jakobson, Diplomacy, p. 71.

approached. The Anglo-French-Soviet talks were just beginning and perhaps the Soviet Union hoped to use the prestige of the Western Powers to forward Russian interests. This was the time of the German offer of a non-aggression pact and, as the Finnish Foreign Minister told the British Ambassador, should an offer be forthcoming from the Soviet Union there would be little doubt that public opinion in Finland would force the Government to accept the German offer.⁴⁹ It is probable that the Anglo-French-Soviet talks were behind the absence of a Russian note to Finland, the Russians hoped to achieve the same objectives through the talks with the two Western Powers.

The proposal for some sort of Anglo-French-Soviet front against Nazi Germany had first been advanced by the British in March when London approached a number of governments to obtain their views on supposedly imminent German aggression. In the light of the negative and evasive answers received, London turned to closer consideration of the idea of a joint declaration by Britain, France, Russia and Poland. Warsaw objected violently, fearing the advisability of joining so obviously an anti-German proposal. Moscow then suggested a conference of the three Powers. It was at this point that Chamberlain yielded to Winston Churchill's advocacy of a Grand Alliance and advised Moscow to issue preparatory declarations of assistance against aggression toward neighbouring states.

When these talks began Finland was naturally worried over the

⁴⁹BD V No. 449.

repercussions that would fall on herself. The grounds for such fear became apparent at the beginning of the talks when Litvinov, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, stated that it was not enough to guarantee only Poland and Rumania, the three Power guarantee would have to cover all Russia's neighbours from the Baltic to the Black Sea.⁵⁰ Since in practise it would be impossible for Britain and France to offer any assistance to these countries because of geography, they were in fact asked to recognize the Soviet Union's rights as protector of its western neighbours. Such a position would, of course, not be acceptable to Russia's neighbours who did not fear German aggression so much as Soviet protection! Finland was among the countries who greatly feared this 'protection' and had made her feelings persistently apparent to the British Ambassador in Helsinki. The British continually reassured the Finns that they were not included in any proposed guarantee emanating from Moscow while, on the other hand, Soviet pressure was brought to bear to extend protection to the Baltic States among which the Russians counted Finland.⁵¹ Molotov, the newly appointed Commissar for Foreign Affairs, stated repeatedly that he was sure Finland would agree to protection by the Soviet Union if it was offered in association with Britain and France.⁵²

⁵⁰Jakobson, Diplomacy, p. 70.

Historian John Erickson implies that the Germans could attack through the Baltic States, that this area did not enjoy full security. John Erickson, The Soviet High Command, London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1962, p. 516.

⁵¹Jakobson, Diplomacy, p. 78.

⁵²BD V No. 530.

Halifax, as British Foreign Secretary, attempted to dissuade the Russians from this wider scheme of extending protection to the Baltic States and Finland. The British military experts thought it highly unlikely that Germany would attack the Soviet Union through Finland, Estonia or Latvia since the front thus afforded would be too narrow to achieve effective results. No German attack on the Soviet Union was thought conceivable except by the broader front of Poland or Rumania, in which event Britain and France would enter the war against Germany.⁵³

On May 22, a British Foreign Office memorandum drew up the pros and cons of an agreement with the Soviet Union. In this memorandum the British absence of a guarantee to Finland, Latvia and Estonia was likened to the absence of a Soviet guarantee to Belgium and Holland. However, the Soviet Government persisted in its fears of a German invasion through the Baltic States. This fear was fanned by the terms of the proposed Anglo-French-Soviet Pact which did not contain the principle of reciprocity as was the case with similar pacts made between Britain, France and Poland. Moscow felt that, not having such a pact, she was placed in a position of inequality and, incidentally, grave danger. Moscow offered other objections to the lack of a mutual assistance clause in the proposed Pact, a number of which were

⁵³Ibid., No. 527.

quite ludicrous but very indicative of Communist xenophobia.⁵⁴

By agreeing to the Soviet wishes for a triple pact of mutual assistance the British would in fact be splitting the world into two rival groups of Powers. Furthermore, it was feared that the agreement would have unpleasant repercussions in the smaller states such as Finland. The strategic need of Britain and France for the Soviet Union was overbearing and a formula was eventually arrived at which was thought satisfactory to all concerned. It was not so much the respect for Russian military strength that brought this about as the fear that the Soviet Union might join with Germany, or the need for 'encircling' Germany to act as a deterrent to aggression. Therefore, Halifax made a proposal which stated that Britain, France and the USSR would support each other against aggression in accordance with the principles of the League of Nations.⁵⁵ On May 27, the British and French Ambassadors presented Molotov with the new proposals. These were totally unacceptable to the Russians. What the Russians were interested in was a guarantee of effective mutual assistance against aggressors, not vague promises of action through a League that might be held up

⁵⁴Ibid., No. 589. For instance, The Soviet Union feared that the mere fact of their making a declaration of association with Britain and France against aggression might provoke an attack by Germany, which, in the absence of a direct guarantee of mutual aid from Britain and France, could be disastrous. The Soviet Government reputedly also believed that a German attack might come through Poland or Rumania with the connivance of these countries in which case the Western Powers would not be called upon to intervene. Like John Erickson, D.F. Fleming believes that Germany could have invaded the Soviet Union by way of the Baltic States. D.F. Fleming, The Cold War and Its Origins, 1917, 1950. Vol. 1, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1961, p. 91.

⁵⁵BD V No. 624.

by a small insignificant country.⁵⁶ Herein lay a misunderstanding. The British had referred to acting in accordance with the principles, though not necessarily through the machinery of the League of Nations. The Russians, for their part, believed this to actually mean according to League procedure; that is, through the agency of the League of Nations. Some attempts were made to clear up this difficulty although Molotov appears to have been intent on not trusting the British under any circumstances.

While it was believed by the British Ambassador that the problems of the mutual assistance pact could be worked out, one other major problem was still threatening the success of the negotiations. This concerned the Baltic States and Finland. It was the Soviet desire that Estonia, Latvia and Finland should receive the same guarantee as Poland and Rumania. Molotov even went so far as to say that Russia would be compelled to come to the assistance of these States whether or not it was requested.⁵⁷ For the Russians, it was an indispensable condition of any agreement that steps should be taken to meet the indirect menace to Soviet security through these three States.

Agreement, however, continued to be impossible and on June 17 Molotov suggested that if Britain and France could not create a system of guarantees for Latvia, Estonia and Finland which was similar to that extended to Belgium, Turkey, Rumania, Greece and Poland, then the

⁵⁶Ibid., No. 648. For some reason Molotov was very antagonistic towards Bolivia whom he named as the nation which might possibly hold up League action.

⁵⁷Ibid., No. 682.

Soviet Government would prefer to postpone the whole question of guarantees in respect to non-signatory States and to confine the Treaty to an arrangement of mutual assistance among the three signatories.⁵⁸ The British felt this view was a complete reversal of the idea with which they had started out, namely to protect Poland and other States which might find themselves in danger of aggression. A mutual assistance arrangement could only be considered as a last resort since it extended to the Soviet Union the benefits of the guarantee to Poland and Rumania without Britain and France receiving any reciprocal benefits. The British and French seem to have forgotten that should an attack be made on Poland and the other States it would not be they who would do the fighting — the Royal Navy in the Atlantic could not help Poland in the Baltic, and France was deeply entrenched behind the Maginot Line — but rather the Russians, the only sufficiently Great Power which had access to Poland and Rumania, the countries of primary concern. It was suggested by the Western Powers that the three northern States be not officially listed as being guaranteed but that Britain and France guarantee to come to the aid of the Soviet Union if the latter became involved in hostilities with Germany owing to German aggression in any of the Baltic States or Finland. Even this Molotov disliked. It appeared he believed some loop-hole might be left if the northern States were not listed by name. The

⁵⁸BD VI No. 73.

Russians well-remembered Munich where they saw an attempt to involve Russia and Germany in war and hence Soviet apprehensions are understandable.

The conclusion that the Western Powers drew from the Soviet attitude was that the Russians wished to secure British assistance or connivance should the Soviet Government find it expedient to intervene in the Baltic States or Finland. This then meant that agreement with the Soviet Union could only be bought at the price of sacrificing the three States -- something the British had always refused to do.⁵⁹ But, in a directive to the British Ambassador on June 12, the British Government had stated that it fully appreciated the possible need of the Soviet Union to occupy one of its northern neighbours in the event it be overrun or agreed to occupation by another power. Such a threat to Russia was likened to a similar menace that might exist towards Britain and France if Holland or Switzerland (who, like the northern States, had refused to be named in a guarantee) were overrun.⁶⁰ The British and French had then agreed that they would come to the aid of the Soviet Union if the Russians felt called upon to 'save' one of their neighbours. Molotov insisted that this would come into effect in case of both direct and indirect aggression. Thus, if Finnish policy became pro-German, or merely anti-Russian, as defined in Moscow, the Russians would feel

⁵⁹On July 6, however, the British gave way and agreed that the Baltic States (Finland excluded) should be guaranteed. Fleming quotes the former Rumanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigore Gafencu. Fleming, Cold War, p. 92.

⁶⁰BD VI No. 35.

entitled to intervene. This was exactly what the northern States feared most. The French were strongly in favor of agreeing to the sell-out of these three countries, claiming that Finland, Estonia and Latvia had to be subordinated to the general interest of preserving peace in Europe.⁶¹ For the British it was not so easy. There was the principle of upholding the rights of small States -- though this had been forgotten at Munich -- to which Britain had committed herself. There was also the danger that these small States might switch their allegiance to Germany in face of the Russian threat to their independence. In vain did the British Government strive for a solution that would insure the independence of the northern States while providing the USSR with a feeling of security.

In the midst of these negotiations in Moscow, the Finnish Government issued an aide-memoire which restated Finnish neutrality and warned that they would view any country that came to their 'assistance' as an aggressor and would act accordingly.⁶²

Towards the end of July an Anglo-French military mission was announced which was to go to Moscow to discuss various aspects of military cooperation. Within ten days Hitler had sent his Ambassador to Moscow offering lusty prizes. After this occurrence the Anglo-French-Soviet military talks were of no importance and were only carried out as a formality. These talks, however, did reveal part

⁶¹Jakobson, Diplomacy, p. 84.

⁶²GD VII No. 56.

of the Soviet designs for Eastern Europe, particularly the Voroshilov Plan which suggested Soviet expansion into Finland, Latvia and Estonia while hiding behind the flags of Britain and France. These negotiations were good illustrations of the Russian phobia against 'capitalism'. It was the principal theme of the Red Army to march as far forward as possible to meet the capitalist enemy from whichever quarter he emerged. That the capitalists would go to war against the 'socialist state' there was no doubt, the question was only -- which capitalists?

CHAPTER III

The Outbreak of World War II and Trade with the Belligerents

On August 15, the German Ambassador in Moscow informed Molotov that the time had come for German-Soviet friendship in view of the fact that the capitalist enemies of both were again, as in 1914, trying to drive Russia into war with Germany. Since time was of the essence Molotov was notified that Ribbentrop would be prepared to come to Moscow to set forth the Fuehrer's views to Stalin.¹ Molotov answered with delight hinting that Ribbentrop's visit should merely signify the closing stages of a non-aggression pact.² The British and French military missions were still in Moscow and would remain till after the Nazi-Soviet Pact had been signed.³

With obvious haste the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed on the night of August 23-24. Appended to the Non-Aggression Pact was a secret protocol that carved out the spheres of interest which the two signatories had decided upon between themselves. Finland was relegated by this agreement to the Soviet sphere.

While the Nazi-Soviet Pact lessened the possibility of war in the Baltic for the moment, the Finnish Foreign Ministry felt it

¹GD VII No. 56.

²Ibid., No. 70.

³Mosley gives an excellent account of the last stages of the Anglo-French military talks with the Russians. Interestingly, Voroshilov, who represented Russia, was not informed of the Nazi-Soviet Pact till virtually the last moment. The recount is based on Russian and French sources.

Leonard Mosley, On Borrowed Time, New York, Random House, 1969. pp.362-64.

would be at the price of Soviet domination. There would be no struggle between major powers for control, or allegiance, of these small States of the Baltic because the Soviet Union had won by default.⁴ A very real fear existed in Finland that there was more to the Non-Aggression Pact than met the eye. There is no reason to believe that the Finns knew of the contents of the secret protocol but they had a deep suspicion of the Russians and, to a lesser extent, of the Germans. Furthermore, Bluecher⁵, the German Ambassador in Helsinki, informed his Government that he believed the British and French had told the Finns that they were unsuccessful in obtaining a pact with the Russians because they had been unwilling to allow the Soviet Union a free hand in the Baltic. The inference would then be that the Germans had allowed the Russians to do whatever they wished in the Baltic.⁶ There was also the fear in Finland that, through the Non-Aggression Pact, the Soviet Union would be able to remain outside the war which was now expected. Then, when the nations of Europe lay prostrate with exhaustion, the Russians might enter

⁴GD VII No. 276.

⁵Bluecher apparently was not informed of the secret protocol to the Nazi-Soviet Pact and therefore had no official information as to the repercussion this would have on his host country.

⁶The complete text of the secret protocol in the Nazi-Soviet Pact was known in Washington within hours of the signing: a member of the American Embassy in Moscow had been smuggled into the German Embassy and had been planted by an agent (a German Embassy official) there so as to be in a position to overhear Ribbentrop reading the protocol to a select number of his staffs who were then sworn to secrecy. It is very likely that the Americans informed the British of the protocol. Mosley, On Borrowed Time, p. 377. The text of the secret protocol appears in the Appendix.

the scene, with Finland being the first to feel the consequences.⁷

On August 22, the British Cabinet issued a statement that the Nazi-Soviet Pact "would in no way affect [the British and French] obligation to Poland which they have repeatedly stated in public and which they are determined to fulfill."⁸

The following day, the Oslo Powers met at Brussels to draft an appeal for peace to be offered by the Belgian King. The statements issued by the Conference emphasized the identity of interests among the Oslo Powers and their intention of safeguarding these interests. The appeal for peace, although phrased in general terms, did not hide a marked hostility towards the Germans.⁹ The conference also established a standing liaison committee for joint action on questions affecting neutrality.

Within a few days Berlin reaffirmed existing relations with the Scandinavian States. Denmark was informed on August 28, that Germany expected the Danes to repulse any infringement on Danish neutrality by a third power.¹⁰ On the day that Germany attacked Poland she informed the remaining three Scandinavian countries that she would not injure, in any circumstances, the inviolability and integrity of Norway, Sweden or Finland. The Germans expressed expec-

⁷GD VII No. 339.

⁸BD VII No. 212 and No. 140 note 3.

⁹GD VII No. 208.

¹⁰Ibid., No. 525.

tation that these three countries would observe strict neutrality towards Germany and would not tolerate breaches of neutrality by third powers.¹¹

War broke out on September 1 as a result of Germany's invasion of Poland. The Scandinavian States publicly reaffirmed their policy of neutrality. Within a few days it was apparent that the Poles were defeated. The crushing of Poland was acknowledged by the military in the Scandinavian countries as a masterpiece of strategy and had opened their eyes to British military impotence. Nonetheless, public opinion still expressed itself strongly in favour of the prostrate Western Powers. True, there was a certain tendency to recognize the justice of Germany's demands that the Western Powers keep out of East European affairs but the people still keenly remembered Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Within a month of the outbreak of war serious peace feelers emanated from all quarters of the world. Among those who offered their services and good offices for returning the world to peace were the King of Norway, former President Svinhufvud of Finland, the ever-busy Dahlerus, and various Scandinavian government people and Church officials.¹² In all instances the offers were turned down.

The negotiations between the neutrals in September, October and the first part of November, in response to the war, had shown that economic cooperation was not feasible. Every country would have to

¹¹Ibid., No. 525.

¹² German reports on peace feelers emanating from Scandinavia are to be found in the following:
GD VIII Nos. 242, 255, 337, 346, 472, 550.

handle its own problems with regard to the economic relationships it established with the belligerents. With the outbreak of the war the Scandinavian States attempted to maintain normal trade with all the warring nations as an aspect of their neutrality. Governed by the fear of German or Russian intervention, the boldest course the Scandinavian countries would take in their economic policies was the withholding of abnormal supplies to Germany in the name of continuance of normal trade.

The period between the outbreak of the Second World War and the attack on Norway and Denmark was a period in which the Nordic countries strove to protect and maintain a true policy of neutrality. Within the first week of war the Germans held negotiations with the Scandinavian States in regard to war-time economic relations. The Danes expressed strongly and unmistakingly their intention to continue economic relations on an intensive scale. The main Danish concern lay with the supply of fodder which was brought in by sea. In Sweden, the German envoy, Hassell, was met with a certain reserve. In Norway, the impression of dependence on England was very pronounced. The Norwegians informed Hassell that they were intent on maintaining intensive trade with Germany but, time and time again, the dependence on England resulting from Norway's geographic position made itself felt. The Finns were extremely friendly in their reception of Hassell but he believed this was largely a reflection of their geographic and political position.¹³

¹³Ibid., No. 42.

Denmark was the first of the Scandinavian countries to be approached by Germany with regard to war-time trade. Already on September 2, the German Ambassador Renthe-Fink, and Hassell had met with the Danish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. The Germans were willing to allow trade between Denmark and Britain as had been agreed in the economic terms of the Dano-German Non-Aggression Pact though it was agreed that Denmark would do her best to maintain economic relations with Germany to the fullest possible extent.¹⁴ In the series of talks that followed between the Danish and German Governments it was decided that the German contraband list would not apply to Denmark because of the applicable clauses in the Non-Aggression Pact between the two countries and because Danish agricultural exports to Germany would be cut if fodder imports from Britain ceased or were in any way impeded.¹⁵ This, however, did not mean that Germany waived her rights to intercept vessels from Britain bound for Denmark or vice versa; it merely stated that, from the German point of view, such trade would not be considered un-neutral on the part of Denmark.¹⁶ This was most reassuring to Denmark who had not hoped to be in such a favourable position in the maintenance of her neutrality.

Toward the end of September, Dr. Walter of the German Ministry of Food came to Denmark to take part in the economic negotiations.

¹⁴GD VII No. 552.

¹⁵GD VIII No. 66.

¹⁶Ibid., No. 83.

Danish authorities stressed the need for unopposed trade with Britain in order that the latter would continue to supply Denmark with fodder and fertilizer needed in the production of foodstuffs exported to Germany. Already there were departures from Hassell's earlier promises with the occurrence of interference with Danish-British trade. The Danish negotiators were desperate to impress upon the Germans the need to stop interference in Danish shipping bound to or from England. Should this not be complied with the mood of the country would turn against Germany and this would have an adverse effect on Dano-German trade.¹⁷

On September 30, the Danish Ship, 'Vendia' was torpedoed by a German U-boat. On the same day three other Danish ships carrying foodstuffs were boarded and taken to Hamburg. These events had been ordered by the German Naval leadership which had taken upon itself the task of stopping shipping between Denmark and England. At this point the German Foreign Ministry stepped in and was successful in terminating these naval infringements since their continuance would put Danish exports to Germany in jeopardy. Britain had already informed Denmark that fodder would only be allowed to go to Denmark so long as the Germans did not interfere with the foodstuffs sent to Britain from Denmark.¹⁸ From this situation grew the 'Maltese Cross Arrangement.'

¹⁷Ibid., No. 165.

¹⁸Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, pp. 308-09.

After the German Foreign Ministry had spoken to the German Naval authorities it was decided that Danish trade with England would proceed under certain safeguards to prevent future incidents. These regulations stipulated that: 1) shipments to England should take place in Danish ships, 2) these ships would carry certain identifying signs, 3) the ships could only carry foodstuffs, and 4) these ships could only leave from one port of departure which was to be Esbjerg.¹⁹ The identifying sign was to be the Maltese Cross, the emblem of the Danish shipping line from which most of the ships would come. The entire arrangement was secret. The Germans maintained secrecy because the arrangement was a break in the German Naval decision to carry out a fullfledged offensive economic-war with Britain. Denmark kept the arrangement secret because a similar working agreement obtained in 1917 with the German Naval authorities, at that time also intent on stopping all trade with Britain, had fallen through because of a leak to the Danish press. This time the Danish press was informed of the situation and ordered to maintain absolute silence on the subject. Contrary to the fact that the Germans only regarded the arrangement to be of short duration it nevertheless lasted till the German invasion on April 9, 1940.²⁰

Trade talks between Denmark and Germany resumed on November 21. There were no major problems. Germany wanted as large an import from

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 309-10.

GD VIII No. 234.

The Germans later agreed to allow for a total of 5 ports of departure with provisions for informing the German Embassy of the departure time and destination of each ship.

²⁰Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, pp. 309-11.

Denmark as possible but the Germans were aware that Denmark could not export much more than the total that ordinarily would have been exported in 1939. There was little to negotiate. Denmark wanted the talks consummated quickly since this would ease the talks that were just beginning with Britain. On November 29, the talks ended although the agreement was not signed till December 22 in Berlin. Denmark's exports to Germany would be 'normal with the figure for 1940 to be 185 million RM.²¹

The German Naval authorities were not happy with the arrangement. They wanted to stop all trade with England. The different neutrals were accordingly warned to sail in British convoys and made aware of the dangers of being near the English coast. In spite of these warnings and the use of the Maltese Cross, Denmark nevertheless lost seven ships in December of 1939. Five or six of these were believed to have been sunk by mines but one, carrying the Maltese Cross, was sunk by a German U-boat after a German spy had stated that it was carrying armaments for Britain. The war at sea was to become more serious with the beginning of the new year.²²

The Norwegians were not at all anxious to have extensive trade with the Germans. They did however agree to maintain their volume of exports to Germany including whale oil from the Norwegian catch which would be maintained at the average level of the years 1936-38. This was insufficient for the Germans but they hoped

²¹Ibid., pp. 316-17.

²²Ibid., pp. 317-18.

to increase the volume by bartering supplies of coal for whale oil.²³ The negotiations with Germany continued but Norway did not appear too interested in settling the matter. The result was that no Maltese Cross arrangement was forthcoming and Norway was to lose fifty-four ships between the outbreak of war and the invasion. This, however, largely reflected the fact that much Norwegian tonnage was chartered by Britain but also that the Germans did not feel called upon to take special consideration of Norway as was the case with Denmark.

The Germans first approached Sweden on September 3 when they asked that the present ratio of trade be maintained and the Swedish licensing system be handled in such a way as to cause no difficulties. Sweden, without going into details or expanding on the German statement, seemed to agree.²⁴ In the negotiations that resulted between Sweden and Hassell the Swedes held much the same view as the Danes, that is, if the Germans interfered with Swedish trade to Britain, this would have an adverse effect on trade with Germany. Public opinion in Sweden was largely against Germany because of the recent torpedoing of two Swedish ships. The Swedes stressed that if such torpedoings continued it would be difficult to have the workers continue to mine ore which would be shipped to Germany.²⁵

However, one of the major problems that immediately faced the

²³GD VIII No. 165.

²⁴GD VII No. 568.

²⁵GD VIII No. 165.

Germans in their economic relations with Sweden was the question of the extent of Sweden's territorial waters. Sweden was claiming territorial waters to the extent of four miles while the Germans were only willing to recognize three miles. The Germans were quite aware of the effect their attitude might have on Swedish trade with Germany, particularly when the Germans would only be able to pay for half of their imports from Sweden for the year 1940 and that half would be paid for in commodities only. Therefore, Swedish good will was essential. The extra mile-zone that the Swedes sought provided a gap between the Baltic and the North Sea by way of which ships could circumvent German naval control. Accordingly, the German navy was convinced that the gap had to be closed while the Foreign Ministry feared that such action before the conclusion of a trade agreement might result in no trade concord.²⁶ On October 31, however, at the insistence of Admiral Raeder, a note was presented to the Swedish Government which stated that Germany would only respect the standard three-mile limit and expressed willingness to discuss the exact course of the line to be used.²⁷ The Swedes were shocked. Sweden had claimed the four-mile limit for many decades, they replied, and was not disposed to give it up now. They viewed the German attitude as unfriendly but were willing to discuss the question of territorial waters through diplomatic channels.

²⁶Ibid., No. 298.

²⁷Ibid., No. 304.

At this point Richert, the Swedish Ambassador in Berlin, presented Sweden's views on maintaining normal trade with belligerents. This in effect stated that Sweden would not undertake trade negotiations unless the repercussions of German-sea warfare on Swedish foreign trade were taken into account.²⁸ Germany replied that they would not interfere with Sweden's trade with the enemy so long as it was kept within normal bounds and on a pre-war scale, neither would they interfere in Swedish trade with neutrals so long as this did not damage trade with Germany. Germany still refused to budge on the question of territorial waters to the extent of four miles.²⁹

The Swedes felt themselves in a good bargaining position. By November 18, they were demanding that the four-mile territorial water zone be respected, that wood and cellulose be removed from the list of unconditional contraband and that halted Swedish ships be dealt with more expeditiously. In return the Swedes would maintain trade except for copper and ferrochrome steel. Likewise, the Swedes were only willing to concede the export of iron ore to a volume of the average of the years 1932-38 which amounted to 7,000,000 tons whereas the Germans demanded the volume for 1939 which was 10,400,000 tons. Finally, Sweden offered the 1938 volume which amounted to 9,500,000 tons. The Germans were still not satisfied. In the mean-

²⁸Ibid., No. 340 footnote.

²⁹Ibid., No. 340

time, pending the final outcome of a trade treaty, the export of iron ore from Sweden continued undiminished.³⁰

On December 22, a trade protocol was signed between Germany and Sweden. It was agreed that Sweden would export goods up to the amounts which were exported to Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland in the year 1938. Certain items, however, were not to be regulated by the 1938 volume, for instance, iron ore to the extent of 10,000,000 tons were to be exported. There was to be no export limit on lumber or cellulose. In return, the Germans were to give Sweden 3,000,000 tons of coal and 1,500,000 of coke as well as certain quantities of chemicals and rolling mill products.³¹

On January 27, 1940, an agreement between the Swedish and German Governments was also reached whereby Sweden was to receive 25,000,000 RM worth of German armaments. This quantity was only one-quarter the amount that Sweden had originally ordered from Germany.³²

By far the most important import that Germany received from Scandinavia was Sweden's iron ore. A controversy had grown up around the question of the importance of this ore to the German war effort, centering around the question of whether the war would have ended earlier if Sweden had stopped entirely the export of iron ore to Germany.

³⁰Ibid., No. 374.

³¹Ibid., No. 481.

³²Ibid., No. 446.

Spain, France, and Sweden were the three great iron ore exporters in Europe. In 1938 Sweden exported 70.5 percent of her total iron ore production to Germany, in 1939 the figure was 78.9 percent, and in 1940 it had risen to 88.1 percent, this represented 24.1, 27.1, and 28.8 percent, respectively, of total German consumption of iron ore. During this same period the iron ore export to Britain ranged from 13.4 percent in 1938 to a scant 6.3 percent in 1940.³³ France was the other great producer of iron ore and, on the average, exported one-third of what was produced. From France, Germany obtained 13.6 percent of her iron ore in 1938 and 7.1 percent in 1939. In previous years Germany had received as much as 27.9 percent (in 1935) and after the defeat of France, Germany took between 18.3 and 22.7 percent from 1941 to 1943. Germany produced little iron ore relative to her need, having to import almost 70 percent. During the period in question Germany produced 33.2, 39.8 and 65.9 percent for the years 1938, 1939, and 1940, respectively, of her total need.³⁴ Great Britain was in a slightly better position being self-sufficient except for 30 percent of her needs.³⁵ When viewing the above,

³³Rolf Karlbom, "Sweden's Iron Ore Exports to Germany, 1933-1944," SEHR, vol. XIII no. 1 (1965), p. 79. Tables 4a & b give the Swedish export of iron ore to major countries for the years 1933 to 1944.

³⁴Ibid., p. 87, Chart (Table 8b) of Germany's total consumption of iron ore for 1933-44.

³⁵Ibid., p. 66.

Germany's dependence on foreign iron ore, and particularly Swedish iron ore, readily becomes apparent. When viewing Germany's total consumption by estimated iron content in the ore, Sweden's contribution becomes even more impressive; for the years 1938, 1939 and 1940, by iron content, Sweden contributed 35.9, 40.3, and 47.8 percent, respectively, to Germany's total consumption. For these same years the German contribution was 21.9, 25.8, and 46.6 percent, respectively, while France contributed a mere 10.3 and 5.4 percent respectively, with no exports to Germany in 1940.³⁶

When war broke out in 1939, Germany lost one of her principal suppliers of iron ore, France. At the time all overseas imports of iron ore were stopped by the Allied blockade; this had accounted for about 12-13 percent of total consumption for the year 1938, a not insignificant figure. The French iron ore exports for the first half of 1939 represented 18 percent of total German iron ore imports. During the second half of the year this figure dropped to 7.2 percent (that is, iron ore shipped from the beginning of July till the outbreak of war represented 7.2 percent of total German imports from July to December). Sweden's exports to Germany in 1939 rose from 43.2 percent for the first half of the year to a grand total of 61.6 percent of the entire German iron ore imports for the last six months of the year.³⁷ In 1940 Germany received 84.4 percent of her imported iron ore from Sweden.³⁸

³⁶Ibid., p. 90.,
Table 9b: Germany's total consumption by estimated iron content, 1933-44.

³⁷Ibid., p. 91, Table 10b.

³⁸Ibid., p. 88, Table 8c.

From these figures one may conclude that from the outbreak of war till the defeat of France, Germany could not have done without Swedish iron ore.

After the fall of France the picture changed radically. Following June, 1940, Germany annexed the French department of Moselle whose ore output averaged about 14,200,000 tons per year, the equivalent of the annual French export surplus. With the French ore Germany became less dependent on Sweden as a supplier of iron ore.³⁹

During the period from the outbreak of war in September till the fall of France in June the following year, one must also look at the extent to which Germany utilized her total iron resources before the importance of Swedish iron ore can be estimated. This raises the question of whether or not Germany was at that time utilizing all her iron resources, imported and domestic, for her military machine, or whether a certain amount was utilized for non-military products which could be drawn upon by the armaments industry if need be. Likewise, if Germany had sufficient stock-piles the importance of Swedish iron ore would then also be minimized. The 'United States Strategic Bombing Survey' estimated that at the beginning of the war Germany had iron ore stocks equivalent to approximately nine months' consumption.⁴⁰ If the Survey is correct,

³⁹Alan S. Milward, "Could Sweden have Stopped the Second World War?" SEHR, vol. XV no. 1 & 2 (1967), p. 128.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 136.
Quoted from United States Strategic Bombing Survey, p. 102.

Germany would have had enough iron ore to last till the fall of France, but one must question what value such knowledge would have been to the Germans since they did not know when France would fall. The Survey does not give its source and therefore should not be considered altogether accurate. In August of 1939, however, Goering had a study made which estimated that Germany had enough iron ore to cover the estimated requirements for only six months. Another study made by the Germans in October, 1940, showed that on September 1, 1939, Germany had stocks of iron ore, measured by iron content, at 4.2 million tons.⁴¹ In either case it becomes apparent that Germany needed Swedish ore. Furthermore, as early as 1938 the Reich Economics Ministry estimated that the iron required per month in a wartime situation would be 1.3 million tons. It was subsequently stated that this figure would only be available to Germany if imports of iron ore from Sweden was maintained at 6 million tons per annum (amounting to 3.3 million tons by iron content.)⁴² Thus it becomes apparent that should Sweden for any reason have ceased to export iron ore to Germany after the outbreak of the war Germany would not have been able to produce the quantities of armaments that did in fact result. However, this statement is only true till the fall of France when the iron production of the Lorraine and Luxemburg area more than doubled Germany's previous output and thus made the Third Reich less dependent on Swedish ore than had been

⁴¹Rolf Karlbom, "Swedish Iron Ore Exports to Germany, 1933-44. A Reply," SEHR, vol. XVI no. 2 (1968), p. 173.

⁴²Loc.cit.

the case up till then.⁴³ Still, for the crucial months between September, 1939, and June, 1940, Germany was totally dependent on Swedish ore in order to defeat the Allies in France and the Low Countries. The success of the German offensive against France therefore rested heavily on Swedish ore which formed the raw material of four out of every ten German guns.

Britain also sought trade agreements with the Scandinavian countries. The agreement concluded with Sweden on December 7, 1939, was the first to be signed during the war. Britain sought to prevent any increases in Swedish exports to Germany, particularly an increase in iron ore. Great Britain was the largest importer of Sweden's timber, wood-pulp and paper and as a rule imported twice as much from Sweden as did Germany. Therefore, it would seem that Britain was in a better position to exert economic pressure on Sweden. Likewise, much of Sweden's imports such as petroleum products, textile raw materials, fruits, and feeding stuffs could effectively be controlled by the Allies.

The Swedes, however, could not be intimidated. When war broke out they were primarily concerned with the preservation of their independence and would forego economic advantages to this end. Furthermore, the Swedes had managed to build up impressive stock-piles and hoped to cooperate with the other Scandinavian countries in sharing available stock. Fear of Germany also acted as a deterrent.

⁴³Jorg Johannes Jäger, "Sweden's Iron Ore Exports to Germany 1933-44," SEHR, vol. XV no. 1 & 2 (1967), p. 140-42.

It was this constant fear of invasion or submarine attack on her shipping that prevented Sweden from going too far in resisting German demands. Therefore, the Swedes were adamant in adhering to a policy of 'normal trade' with all the belligerents.

The British first approached Sweden on September 7 with an aide-memoire which outline the terms of a temporary war-trade agreement. Sweden stated her desire not to profit from the war but at the same time expressed her fear of Germany, and therefore did not feel in a position to restrict export of iron ore beyond a certain point. Ordinances had already been issued which prevented the export of goods without a license and insured that belligerents did not receive goods exceeding normal proportions.

On September 29 the trade negotiations began between Britain and Sweden, being held in London in the interest of secrecy. Because of the aide-memoire of September 7 and the desire of both parties to come to terms the negotiations began smoothly. The one great outstanding problem was iron ore: Sweden was unwilling to enter into any agreement or give assurances that export of iron ore to Germany would be reduced below the average of the immediate years before the war. At this time the British presumed that they would be able to stop the ore traffic from Narvik and it was therefore disconcerting to discover that the Baltic port of Lulea, though ice-bound for half a year, could cope with an increase of shipping to the extent that the Narvik trade could be replaced. Britain stated that she felt any change in the existing economic arrangements with regard to shipping of the iron ore would be unneutral. Sweden replied

that she was unwilling to enter into any agreement with Britain regarding iron ore for Germany but did concede that she would, to the best of her abilities, limit exports to Germany on technical grounds. The Swedes made no secret of the fact that they would like to halt shipments to Germany, but, throughout, they were governed by the fear of German retaliation. Sweden had already declined a German offer to build a railway to Lulea on the grounds of its being unneutral. Furthermore, they would plead a shortage of labour because of conscription and thus hold down the iron ore produced.

While the position of Sweden was not to the liking of Britain, it was felt that agreement would have the effect of at least placing some restrictions on the iron ore exports, particularly since the Allies were in no position to stop the trade by force of arms. Britain did not feel that she could economically pressure Sweden too much since that country might retaliate by restricting export of various steel and iron products vital in British armament industries.

Sweden readily undertook not to issue export licenses for certain ferro-alloys that were allowed to pass through the Allied blockade for processing in Sweden. Special consideration was given to items such as tungsten, ferro-tungsten, chrome ore, ferro-chrome, vanadium, and ferro-vanadium which would be re-exported to Allied States. Pre-war contracts with Germany for commodities listed under this arrangement were to be filled from stocks available in Sweden till such time as these stocks were exhausted. The arrangement with

foodstuffs and fertilizers was on similar lines. Britain sought to exclude exports to Germany by securing supplies for Sweden which passed through British contraband control and in this manner could prevent Sweden from producing beyond her own need. Sweden, however, was often able to plead fear of Germany if supplies were restricted beyond a certain point.

The final problem that existed between the two countries was the definition of 'normal trade'. The British advocated the average of the previous ten years, the Swedes objected to this because of the enormous increase of trade that had taken place in recent years and because they believed that the Germans would not agree to this scheme at all. It was finally agreed to take the 1938 figures, which was the last year of peace. This was actually of some benefit to the British since their imports from Sweden in that year had been rather more than usual while Swedish exports to Germany had been less than the norm.

A shipping agreement was also arrived at. This specified that all trade with Britain as well as all imports into Sweden should be carried in Swedish vessels. Any surplus tonnage or cargo space could be chartered by the British. It was also agreed that outward-bound Swedish vessels would not have to call at British control ports for searching for contraband but rather that the Swedish Sjöfartskommitten["] was to undertake investigation of the country or origin of cargoes shipped in its vessels.

Signed on December 7, the agreement came into effect on December 20 but was kept secret till after the completion of the German-Swedish negotiations. The agreement was beneficial to the Allies in that it curbed any excesses in imports that Germany might obtain from Sweden and in that the Swedes unofficially promised to obstruct the export of iron ore to the best of their abilities.⁴⁴

The British approached Norway on September 5 but no agreement was signed till March 11, 1940. The negotiations with Norway were slow: Britain had means of pressuring the Norwegians which invited their resistance, there was a great fear of German reprisal in Norway, and the Norwegians were tempted to seek high profits from the British.

Britain was primarily concerned with securing the use of Norway's extensive merchant fleet and denying to Germany Norway's resources of timber products, fish products, hides and certain metals. To achieve this, Britain was well-equipped to bring pressure on the Norwegians. The Allied countries imported some 35 percent of Norway's exports as against Germany's 14 percent. Likewise, the Allies supplied some 30 percent of Norway's imports as against 17.5 percent from Germany. Furthermore, virtually all Norway's imports and exports were sea-borne, therefore at the mercy of the British Navy, and while Britain could dispense with her Norwegian imports, Norway was dependent on the bread cereals, textile raw materials and mineral oil which came through the Allied shipping control.

⁴⁴W.N. Medlicott, The Economic Blockade Vol. I, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1952, pp. 141-52.

Like Sweden, Norway had accumulated considerable stocks of her overseas imports. Furthermore, the Norwegians could refuse to charter their shipping vessels to the Allies if pressure was maintained from that quarter. There was never any question as to the Allies' inability to protect Norway from a German attack and the lack of Norwegian defensive equipment made it impossible for her to go far in resisting German demands.

The shipping agreement was initialed on November 11. For excessively high rates the Allies chartered approximately 1,500,000 tons deadweight of ocean-going tankers and 700,00 tons of tramp tonnage for the duration of the war. The agreement, which had been concluded by the Association of Norwegian Shipowners, would not go into effect till a war-trade agreement had been concluded with the Norwegian Government, however. The Norwegian Government wanted to maintain 'normal trade' with Germany while the British felt that they had enough of an economic hold on the Norwegians to restrict this. The Norwegians were not always tactful in the manner in which they conducted the negotiations with the British. While both sides were striving to come to an agreement as soon as possible, Norway refused to grant export licences for aluminum destined for the Allies in excess of their peace-time purchases, even though the aluminum factories were controlled by the Allies. Such actions, and there were others, antagonized the British and made them feel that Norway was not sincere in reaching agreement.

A Norwegian trade delegation arrived in London on December 8, however, and provisional agreements were reached on a number of points

the first week. At the end, Norway agreed to prohibit the export of a number of goods on the contraband list which contained up to 12.5 percent in value of prohibited commodities. On the other hand, she was allowed to export a list of wholly made-in-Norway goods. All other goods were only to be exported on a peace-time level to all destinations, although certain provisions were made in the case of neutrals. Special provision was made for the electro-chemical and electro-metallurgical industries which were dependent on raw materials coming through the Allied blockade and much of whose capital was held by the Allies. For these industries it was agreed that Norway might export to anyone in whatever quantities she desired. Since the Allies controlled the amount of raw materials allowed into the country they could prevent any company which sold to the Germans from obtaining supplies.

Difficulties arose over Norwegian export of whale oil, fish and fish products, copper pyrite and iron ore to Germany. Britain at first demanded that export of these commodities to Germany be stopped. The Norwegian Government pointed out that such action would be wholly unneutral. Fearing that there might be a rupture in the negotiations, the British gave in and allowed the Norwegians to export peace-time levels of whale oil and fish to Germany. The case with iron ore, copper pyrite, nickel and molybdenum was much the same; the British allowed the export to Germany in view of the Norwegian insistence.

The agreement was finally signed on March 11, 1940, in London. Within a month the Germans invaded Norway. The protraction of the negotiations had been largely due to the fact that the Norwegians were less willing than the Swedes to resist the efforts of the Germans to secure commodities. Therefore, one might ask how effective the agreement would have been had the German invasion not come.⁴⁵

Of all the Anglo-Scandinavian war-trade agreements, the one with Denmark was perhaps the most difficult. This was primarily due to the country's proximity to Germany and the fear of attack which sprang therefrom.

Before the war Great Britain imported virtually all Denmark's excess bacon and dairy products. In return Britain and the Allies provided Denmark with 76 percent of her coal and some 88 percent of her feedstuffs as well as various other necessary imports. Germany imported much less of Denmark's exports of dairy products. In total, the Allies imported 54 to 60 percent of Denmark's exports while supplying the country with 40 percent of her imports. Germany imported 18 to 21 percent of Denmark's export goods and provided the country with 25 percent of her imports.

Britain appeared in a strong bargaining position by virtue of supplying Denmark with most of her fodder and coal and coke. The balance of trade between the two countries was decidedly in favour of Denmark and Britain could block the huge sterling balances should Denmark refuse to come to terms. These sterling balances had been used in the past

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 152-63.

to make dollar purchases of feeding-stuffs and petroleum. The Allied position was, however, weakened by Britain's dependence on Danish agricultural produce and the Allies inability to prevent a German attack.

When Britain's draft text of a provisional trade agreement had been presented in the first week of war Denmark had replied that she wished to maintain trade on a pre-war level with both sides. At this point the Maltese Cross arrangement with Germany took place and in response Britain gave a verbal assurance to Denmark that they would not interfere in normal Danish-German trade pending a final war-trade agreement.

The British stated that they would seek an agreement similar to that concluded with Sweden except that fodder and export of food-stuffs would be dealt with on a different basis. Denmark was not to re-export certain imports except under safeguards to other Scandinavian countries and was to restrict other exports to belligerents to a 'normal trade' level.⁴⁶

One area of difficulty hindering an agreement between Denmark and Britain was the question of the restrictions which the British wished to place on the large sterling surplus resulting from the excess of Danish exports to Great Britain. In 1938 this sterling surplus amounted to £20,000,000 and it was expected that the trade balance for

⁴⁶The country to which these imports were re-exported would have to give assurances that it would not sell the goods to Germany. Such safeguards existed in all the war-trade agreements signed with the Scandinavian States.

1939 would be larger. Britain hoped to convince Denmark to agree to a scheme whereby her sterling balance would be blocked and payments from it controlled. There was no question of breaking off, or even reducing, trade with Denmark at this stage since it was estimated that Great Britain would be dependent on Danish food imports for at least another six months.

On March 12 a war-trade agreement was initialed. It followed largely the agreements made with Sweden and Norway. It was stipulated that Denmark would maintain 'normal trade' on the basis of the average of 1937 and 1938, that certain specified controls would be maintained in exports, and that Britain would be supplied with monthly statistics of imports and exports. The payments agreement came into effect on April 1. This agreement stipulated that payments on food-stuffs be made to an account of the National Bank of Denmark at the Bank of England. Funds originating from chartered Danish vessels would be split between the closed National Bank of Denmark account and an open account, part of which would be used to pay for Danish purchases and debts in the sterling bloc and the rest of which would be converted to gold. The trade agreement was officially signed on April 2, a week before the German invasion. A shipping agreement was not signed before the invasion.

In the last few months of negotiating it had become increasingly apparent that Britain was more concerned with effecting the economic blockade than protecting her own imports from Denmark. But it was also apparent that Britain could not really harm Germany by cutting off the supply of fodder to Denmark since Denmark could produce enough foodstuffs for herself and Germany. Therefore, the hard economic

negotiations that took place after the beginning of 1940 must be seen as an attempt to curb the mounting Danish sterling credits so that these could not be put at the disposal of Germany under any circumstances. It was already known that Denmark was giving Germany £1,000,000 yearly to cover the Danish trade deficit. To this the British Government had acquiesced but persistent rumours circulated that Denmark was making available a considerably larger sum under German pressure.⁴⁷

Finland was the only Scandinavian country which had not come to an agreement with any of the belligerents. At about the time when negotiations between the other Scandinavian States and Germany or Great Britain were only seriously getting under way she had become embroiled in war with the Soviet Union.

While the Scandinavian States negotiated with the belligerents over war-trade agreements both sides in the war had already begun to conduct small scale naval warfare in these neutral waters. The first action concerned the Baltic. Towards the end of October the High Command of the German Navy decided to send ships into the Baltic area in an attempt to intercept ships of the eastern Baltic States bound for England which were passing through the Aaland Sea on their way to neutral Swedish waters.⁴⁸ The Russians immediately objected. At this time the Soviet Union was in the midst of negotiations with

⁴⁷Medlicott, Economic Blockade, pp. 163-77.
Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, pp. 318-30.

⁴⁸GD VIII No. 300.

Finland and Molotov informed the German Ambassador in Moscow that such naval action as Germany proposed to undertake might be construed as a demonstration in Finland's favour. The Soviet Government therefore requested that the intended measures might be cancelled as they could be interpreted as an unfriendly act. When informed that the German action aimed merely at intercepting Finnish exports of lumber to Britain, Molotov asked that Germany confine such activities to the Swedish side of the Baltic.⁴⁹ Germany complied with the Soviet requests which, in effect, nullified what the German Navy had set out to do: the shipping bound for Britain could only be intercepted legally while on the high seas; once the ships reached the neutral waters of Sweden they were relatively safe. Therefore, having been 'banned' from much of the area in which they might intercept the shipping the German Navy was largely ineffectual in stopping the supplies from reaching Britain.

The first naval incident of the war that took place in Norwegian waters concerned the American ship, the 'City of Flint'. On October 9 this ship was intercepted by the German warship, 'Deutschland', on the high seas and taken as a war prize for carrying contraband. A German crew took over the ship and headed for Murmansk from where they were permitted to leave by the Soviet Union after five days in spite of representations of the American Government. The 'City of Flint' headed for Germany along the Norwegian coast. According to international law no action could be taken against the ship in

⁴⁹Ibid., No. 305.

neutral waters so long as it was moving. A Norwegian warship escorted the captured 'City of Flint' and when the German crew dropped anchor at Haugesund on November 3 the Norwegians seized the ship. The German officers and crew were captured and interned by the Norwegians and the 'City of Flint' released.⁵⁰ The German Government protested violently. According to the Norwegian Foreign Minister Germany threatened Norway with the "worst consequences" if the ship was not immediately returned to the German crew.⁵¹ Norway remained firm in her position; she acted according to international law applying to prizes when she seized the German crew and restored the ship to American control. The incident had the unfortunate effect for Germany that it helped persuade the American Congress to raise the arms embargo, which greatly aided Britain.⁵²

At the beginning of the war Denmark had mined some of her territorial waters but had left the Belts and the Sound mine-free in accordance with the agreement between Germany and Denmark in 1938. The Germans themselves laid mines in international waters south of the Big Belt and the Sound. On November 4, however, the German Naval High Command decided to close off the entrance to the Baltic. Denmark and Sweden were accordingly informed that unfriendly submarines had been sighted in their waters and were asked to take measures to prevent the recurrence. Five days later the German Naval Attaché in Copenhagen met with the Danish Navy High Command and urged it to invoke a closing

⁵⁰Koht, Norway, Neutral, pp. 24-25.
GD VIII No. 301.

⁵¹Koht, Norway Neutral, p. 25.

⁵²GD VIII No. 323.

of the Belts and Sound. The Danish Government found it very difficult to understand the German attitude. In the first place, it was inconceivable that Britain would send her big cumbersome submarines into the Baltic (which was not a war zone) where the submarines could not be supplied. Secondly, where the closing of the approaches to the Baltic would not have aroused much interest at the beginning of the war, the same could not be said two months later -- particularly in view of Germany's earlier insistence that the Belts and Sound remain open. The Germans by now were desperate in their bid to close the Baltic and on November 17, the German Naval Attaché informed Denmark that two German warships had been under attack by submarines in the western Baltic. No one in the Danish Government believed this story but it nevertheless had the desired effect. On November 20 Denmark, prompted by the fear that Germany might undertake to mine the Danish waters if that country did not do it, officially stated that mining of certain key areas of the Belts and Sound would take place.⁵³ As to the German attitude and its sudden change from before the war one can only conclude that the German Navy did not want any interference in its preparations for an eventual attack on Norway and Denmark.

By far the most important action that took place in Scandinavian waters -- and almost on Scandinavian territory -- concerned the iron

⁵³Sjøqvist, Udenrigspolitik, pp. 335-37.

ore traffic through Narvik. It has previously been shown the extent to which Germany was dependent on Swedish iron ore. This fact did not escape the British Government which sought from the earliest period in the war to stop the traffic of iron ore, and particularly the traffic coming by way of Narvik. The facilities at Narvik were particularly important, as the total iron ore supply came through this centre in winter when the Baltic froze and Lulea was closed.

On September 3, Winston Churchill was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, the post he had held in the First World War. This genius of a man set about solving the problem of the iron ore trade. On September 12, a minute was signed calling for the preparation of a naval squadron specially protected for entry into the Baltic.⁵⁴ The ships would be R class battleships with two of their four 15-inch turrets removed. The weight thus saved (2,000 tons) would afford for further horizontal armour as well as a reinforcement in the ships' anti-aircraft gun armament. Further provisions were made to reduce their draught and stop torpedos. It was proposed that the Baltic force consist of three to five of these ships, as well as cruisers, destroyers, submarines, supply ships and, perhaps, even an aircraft-carrier. The purpose of this naval force was to protect Sweden from invasion, in which case it was hoped the country would join with the Allies. In retrospect the plan was highly improbable of success. It was, however, given

⁵⁴Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948, pp. 422-24, and Appendix G, pp. 550-52.

serious thought and was not discarded till January, 1940, when it was learned that the ships would not be finished in time for the spring thaw and because Churchill began to realize the technical weaknesses of the Royal Navy's anti-aircraft armaments.⁵⁵ The plan caught the imagination of the military leaders in that it offered a bloodless way of ending the war merely by shutting off Germany's supply of Swedish iron ore.

Even before the plans for a Baltic naval force had been thought out in detail Churchill was proposing methods of stopping the iron ore traffic coming from Narvik. His plan of September 19 called for the mining of the Leads in Norwegian territorial waters, thus forcing the ore transports out into the open sea where the Royal Navy could deal with them. The British Foreign Office objected that such a breach of Norwegian neutrality might result in a Norwegian-German alliance, or at least in a German attempt to obtain bases in southern Norway from which attacks on British naval forces might occur. Churchill's scheme was overruled although he continued, at intervals, to press for such action.⁵⁶ Churchill eventually came to advocate the mining of Norwegian waters in the same manner that the North Sea from Scotland to the coast of Norway had been mined in the First World War. At that time the Allies had mined up to, but not including, Norwegian territorial waters. Strong pressure had been placed on Norway to mine her own waters and effectively close the North Sea. Being neutral Norway had

⁵⁵ Moulton, Norwegian Campaign, p. 44.

⁵⁶ Medlicott, Economic Blockade, pp. 184-85.

Moulton, Norwegian Campaign, p. 44.

Johs. Andenaes, O. Riste and M. Skodvin, Norway and the Second World War, Oslo, Johan Grundt Tanum Forlag, 1966, pp. 14-15.

refused till September, 1918. By that time Germany was in no position to undertake any preventive action against Norway and, in fact, the war ended before the mining was actually undertaken.⁵⁷ In the Second World War Norway was seen to follow much the same policy till the events of April, 1940.

While the larger share of the iron ore traffic stemmed from Narvik a considerable amount moved from the Baltic port of Lulea. Narvik was ice-free all year round, Lulea was not. Therefore, in some Allied circles the assumption was growing that by stopping the Narvik traffic the iron ore shipments to Germany would in effect be halted. This was erroneous. While Lulea was ice-bound for four months each year it could be made capable of handling the full Swedish export of iron ore with little difficulty. In effect, the stoppage of the Narvik shipments alone would have little consequence.

The need for action was strong and in early December Churchill proposed that a British naval force be sent into remote parts of Norwegian territorial waters to arrest all vessels carrying ore. By this time, however, the Norwegian Government had decided to have its navy escort the ore shipments in convoys while these vessels were in Norwegian territorial waters. In view of this, the proposal was dropped in favour of the possibility of mining Norwegian waters.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, the French delegate to the Supreme War Council suggested that Norway and Sweden be assured of the fullest Franco-British

⁵⁷Churchill, Gathering Storm, p. 532.

⁵⁸Medlicott, Economic Blockade, pp. 185.86.

cooperation in anything which might assist Finland in the war with Russia which had just broken out. It was suggested that such a situation might be exploited by sending an Anglo-French expedition to occupy Narvik, and the Swedish ore fields as part of the process. The employment of a small force of 3 - 4,000 picked men had already been under discussion as a means of interrupting the Narvik trade. At this stage of the plans, however, no landings as such were contemplated but merely the active interruption of the ore traffic by naval action in Norwegian territorial waters. On December 27, the Norwegian and Swedish Ambassadors in London were informed that the Allies would give unofficial aid to Finland and were prepared to offer assistance to the Scandinavian countries if they became involved in difficulties as a result of they, themselves, aiding the Finns. The Norwegian and Swedish Governments replied that they were not at present interested in obtaining Allied assurances.⁵⁹ The vehement Scandinavian rejection of the Allied offer of aid temporarily ended Anglo-French overtures.

On January 6, Norway received a British aide-memoire which stated that because of the recent torpedoing of three Allied or neutral ships in Norwegian waters the British felt obliged to extend their own naval operations into those waters. Norway recounted that two of the ships had been sunk on the periphery of her terri-

⁵⁹Sir Llewellyn Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, London, Her Majesty's Stationery office, 1962, p. 22.

torial waters and in only one case was it believed that the sinking had been done by torpedoing rather than mines. Furthermore, Norway stated that infringements on her neutrality by one belligerent did not justify a similar infraction by the other side. Sweden also protested that the British proposal would end the independent existence of the Scandinavian countries.⁶⁰ The British attempted to explain the position they had taken but to no avail; Norway did not consider the British justified in extending naval action to her territorial waters and jeopardizing her existence merely because Britain was fighting for her life.⁶¹

At the end of January the second phase of the Scandinavian episode concerned with the Narvik trade began. This plan called for the Scandinavian Governments to be persuaded to enter the Russo-Finnish war on behalf of Finland. Allied 'volunteers' would be sent to Finland through the Scandinavian countries, leaving a force to protect the supply line -- and incidentally -- to occupy the ore fields. The plan was totally insane! Finland, who by now was negotiating with the Russians, was to call for Allied aid, although it was unlikely that it would arrive in time and would only consist of a mere 12,000 men. The troops would go to Finland by way of Norway and Sweden, and this, of course, would bring these two countries into the war on the side of the Allies, a plan which the

⁶⁰GD VIII Nos. 566 and 571.
Woodward, Foreign Policy, p. 24.

⁶¹Woodward, Foreign Policy, p. 24.

Scandinavians were aware of and not interested in. When Finland was informed of the scheme she asked for 50,000 men and 100 bombers — immediately. The force would not be ready for a month, a period for which Finland could not hold out. Sweden and Norway, of course, rejected the Allied proposal in no uncertain terms. The French now advocated carrying out the plan in spite of Scandinavian objections. They thought the two Governments would not commit themselves to the plan openly but would not oppose an Allied force if it landed. On March 13, the Finnish Government informed Britain that it had signed an armistice with Russia. As far as the British were concerned, this ended the affair. In France, however, Reynaud had just succeeded Daladier and, anxious to flex French muscles, he suggested that the Allies land in Scandinavia in any case. Although the French offered 50,000 men for the venture the British did not accept the offer.⁶²

The proposal for the Anglo-French force to aid Finland was merely an excuse to seize the Swedish ore fields. There is no question that the force would have been ineffectual in aiding the Finns; it was far too small for the task. The French, to their discredit, were prepared to fight both Germany and Russia in Scandinavia as long as they would not have to fight Germany on French territory. The Allied proposal did accomplish two things: first, it persuaded Stalin to conclude peace with Finland; second, it may have influenced Hitler's

⁶²Ibid., pp. 24-29.

decision (in December) to invade Scandinavia in order to protect the iron ore supply.⁶³

While the planning for an Allied expedition into Scandinavia was taking place a drama involving the German Ship, 'Altmark', was unfolding. This was the first action in which a British warship operated in Norwegian waters. The German 'Altmark' came into Norwegian waters at the beginning of February after having done service with the German cruiser, 'Admiral Graf Spee', in South American waters. The unarmed ship, registered as a warship, had orders to pass through Norwegian waters without stopping.⁶⁴ To the British it was a well-known ship and believed to be carrying British prisoners from vessels sunk by the 'Admiral Graf Spee'. The Norwegians were not as fully aware of the identity of the ship.

The 'Altmark' arrived off Trondheimfjord on February 14, 1940, and was delayed off Bergen while Norway considered giving the naval auxiliary ship passage through Norwegian waters without search. In reply to questioning, the Captain stated that the ship carried no prisoners. During the delay off Bergen the British Naval Attaché at Oslo had had time to inform the British Admiralty of the presence of the ship. The Norwegians, however, were satisfied with the 'Altmark's' answers and let the ship pass with an escort from the

⁶³G. St. J. Barclay, "Alliance Against Nobody: The Scandinavian Experiment in Neutrality, 1936-48," Australian Outlook, vol. 19 no.2 (August 1965) pp. 199-200.

Barclay believes the Russians ended the Finnish war as quickly as possible to avoid a clash with the Allies and that the plans for an Allied expeditionary force confirmed Hitler in his intention to invade Scandinavia to forestall Allied plans against the ore route.

⁶⁴GD VIII No. 568.

Norwegian Navy, since they, in any event, had no right to search a warship. At about 5 p.m., February 16, a British cruiser and five destroyers came into view of the 'Altmark'. An unsuccessful attempt was made to stop the ship which thereupon headed into the safety of Jössing Fjord. By now a second Norwegian vessel had arrived to escort the 'Altmark'. Nevertheless, two British destroyers entered the Fjord while the rest of the British force remained outside. The Norwegians placed themselves between the 'Altmark' and the two destroyers and protested the infringement of Norway's neutrality. The British destroyers withdrew. The Norwegian naval commander asked the 'Altmark's' Captain if the ship carried prisoners and again the answer was negative. At 8 p.m. one British destroyer returned and headed for the 'Altmark'. The Norwegians were informed that the ship was carrying Allied prisoners and were given the option of taking the 'Altmark' back to Bergen for a search. When the Norwegians declined, the British destroyer, 'Cossack', came alongside the 'Altmark' and boarded her. Although the German captain surrendered after running aground there was some shooting, resulting in seven German deaths and one British and a number of German wounded. A total of 299 officers and men were released from the 'Altmark' which was allowed to continue on its voyage once it got off the shore.⁶⁵

⁶⁵Ibid., No. 618.

Moulton, Norwegian Campaign, pp. 52-54.

Koht, Norway, Neutral, pp. 37-38.

Germany violently objected to the Norwegian's inaction in the affair. Protests of this nature were unfounded since First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, had purposely ordered out so large a force that Norway would not be in a position to seriously attempt to interfere.⁶⁶ In the diplomatic turmoil that followed the British charged that the Norwegians allowed their neutrality to be exploited, pointing to previous incidents where three Allied or neutral ships had been sunk in Norwegian waters.⁶⁷ The Norwegians replied that no international law existed governing the transfer of prisoners through neutral waters. The British were clearly in the wrong and later admitted they had violated Norwegian territorial waters but felt justified since the 'Altmark' was not engaged in 'innocent passage' as allowed under international law.⁶⁸ No lasting antagonism between Norway and Britain resulted. Relations with Germany continued to be strained over the incident and the situation worsened about a month later when a German submarine became grounded in Norwegian waters.

The incident involved the U-21 which grounded in Norwegian territorial waters on March 27. In spite of violent German protests the crew was interned by the Norwegian authorities. Norway's action was prompted by her ardent desire to maintain her neutrality and to insure that this would be respected by the belligerents.⁶⁹ This,

⁶⁶Koht, Norway, Neutral, p. 39.

⁶⁷Referring to the British aide-memoire to Norway of January 6.

⁶⁸Koht, Norway, Neutral, pp. 39-40.

⁶⁹GD IX No. 17.

however, was only one instance of an increasing number of incidents. By the middle of March, 1940, the British Navy was openly operating in Norway's waters. The situation stemmed from a British note to the Norwegian Government, dated January 2, 1940, issued in regard to the sinking of three British or neutral vessels in Norwegian waters. In the note, Britain asserted her right to patrol Norway's waters to insure their neutrality. No action had arisen at the time of the note but now, in an effort to interfere with the ore traffic and to meet increasing German activity in these waters, Britain was using the note to justify her illegal actions.⁷⁰ Events continued in this vein in the last few weeks before the invasion of Scandinavia. By late March and early April some indication of what was amiss were indicated by the Scandinavian countries. On April 2, Sweden informed the German Government that she did not fear a British invasion of Scandinavia but made it abundantly clear what Sweden's actions would be if any aggressive moves were directed against her. At the same time, the Swedish Ambassador, while delivering the Swedish note, asked about the German troops who were massing at the port of Stettin.⁷¹ Within a week these troops would be seeing the sights in the venerable kingdom of Denmark or enjoying the majestic splendor of Norway's fjords.

⁷⁰U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940, Vol. 1, Washington, D. C., United States Government Printing Office, 1959, pp. 136-38.

⁷¹GD IX No. 38.

CHAPTER IV

Finland Succumbs to the Soviet Union

On the morning of November 30, 1939, Helsinki shook beneath Russian bombs. Its demands concerning the lease of Hangoe naval base, cession of five islands in the Gulf of Finland and some land on the Karelian Isthmus rejected, the Soviet Union had decided to apply stronger tactics. Under the circumstances the Soviet territorial demands were in themselves not extensive and, to some degree, justifiable. However, Finland had watched the steady encroachment by the Soviet Union into the Baltic States and had prepared to resist any Russian demands that were forthcoming.

Hardly had the defeat of Poland been accomplished before the Soviet Union began its negotiations with the Baltic States which eventually brought about their annihilation. The steps in all cases were similar: the foreign ministers of the respective countries would be invited to Moscow where treaties of friendship and reciprocal aid were signed which granted naval and air bases to the Soviet Union. Estonia signed such a treaty on September 28, 1939, Latvia on October 5 and Lithuania on October 11. Finland was the only country which refused to sign. The Finns were made to pay a heavy price for their obstinacy but they were able to maintain their continuance as an independent state.

Before Estonia signed her treaty with the Soviet Union, Finland had already made public that she would never accept such terms and would rather "let it come to the worst."¹ This was a

¹GD VIII No. 143.

harrowing time for the Finns. The traditional position of Britain in Finnish economic life had been changed by the outbreak of the Second World War. This had put a stress on the economic prosperity of Finland. Likewise, the security of the country was threatened: the buffer states of Poland and the Baltic States had, or were about to, collapse; the security of alignment with the Scandinavian countries had been shown to be largely fictitious at the outbreak of the war. In such an atmosphere the Finnish Government was well aware that it must strive to maintain good relations with both the Germans and the Russians. Foreign Minister Erkkö spoke of making Finland a transit country for German-Russian trade during the period of the year when the Leningrad harbour was frozen over. Erkkö suggested that he was not adverse to meeting Russian wishes for the acquisition of certain islands in the Gulf of Finland. With regard to Germany, although the sympathy of the Finns was with the Allies in the war Erkkö had seen to it that the Finnish press maintain a completely neutral policy in editorials and news reports.² Such was the situation when the Soviet invitation to Moscow was extended to the Finnish Foreign Minister.

The invitation was received on October 5 for Erkkö or his representative to come to Moscow for an exchange of ideas regarding certain concrete political questions. The Finns had absolutely no idea of what the Russians wanted. Rumours had it

²Ibid., No. 147.

that the Russian demands would be directed toward Viipuri or Aaland, in which case Finland would fight. However, if the Russians were only interested in minor islands such as Seiskari and Lavansaari in the Gulf of Finland there was room for negotiations.³ Erkkö would not consider going to Moscow himself and the choice fell on Ambassador Paasikivi, who was stationed in Stockholm at the time. On October 9, the Russians were informed that a Finnish delegate was being sent to Moscow. The following day, several classes of reserves were called up for 'supplementary manoeuvres,' the frontier guards having already been mobilized on October 5.⁴ On the same day, October 10, the Scandinavian States separately submitted identical notes to the Soviet Government expressing their expectation that Soviet demands on Finland would not violate her independent position of neutrality.⁵ Molotov refused to receive the notes.

Paasikivi and his entourage reached Moscow on October 11. His Government's instructions were to stress that Russo-Finnish relations had been regularized by the peace treaty of 1920 and the non-aggression pact that followed in 1932. Furthermore, Paasikivi was to stress Finland's Scandinavian orientation which assured her strict neutrality. He was not to enter into discussion involving any demands which threatened Finland's independence, nor was he to tell the Russians that Finland was prepared to conclude a mutual aid pact

³Ibid., No. 206.

⁴Loc. cit.,
John H. Wuorinen, ed., Finland and World War II, New York, The Ronald Press Co., 1948, p. 53.

⁵Wuorinen, Finland and World War II, p. 62.

or grant military bases on Finnish territory. He was, however, allowed to discuss the possible exchange of certain Gulf of Finland islands for territory elsewhere.⁶

On the same day that Paasikivi reached Moscow, President Roosevelt addressed a letter to Soviet President Kalinin expressing his concern and hope that no demands would be made on Finland which would be inconsistent with the maintenance and a development of good relations between the two countries, and the independence of each.⁷ Kalinin's reply was evasive, stating that the negotiations would take place on the basis of earlier relationships between the countries and the purpose of the talks would be to consolidate the friendly cooperation in building up the security of both countries.⁸

The negotiations began at 5 p.m. on October 12. Apart from Paasikivi, Stalin and Molotov only a few aides and interpreters were present. Molotov began the discussion by asking whether Finland would agree to a mutual assistance treaty similar to the ones signed with the Baltic States. Paasikivi replied that such a treaty would not be in keeping with the Scandinavian neutrality orientation of Finland. The question of a mutual assistance treaty was never mentioned again. The Russians now suggested that the Non-Aggression Pact between the two countries be amended to provide for a mutual

⁶Ibid., p. 53.

⁷Ibid., pp. 61-62.

⁸Vainö Tanner, The Winter War, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1957, p. 83.

undertaking for either not to join any group which was hostile, directly or indirectly, to the other. This was acceptable to the Finns. At this point Stalin took over and outlined the main Russian demands which were designed to insure the safety of Leningrad.

In order to safeguard Leningrad Finland was to lease the Peninsula of Hanko and the surrounding area for a period of thirty years for the establishment of a Russian naval base with coastal artillery. Certain islands in the Gulf of Finland were to be ceded outright to the Russians and the frontier on the Karelian Isthmus was to be moved farther north to put Leningrad out of artillery range. Fortifications on both sides of the Karelian frontier were to be demolished. Apart from providing for the protection of Leningrad, Finland was also to cede part of the Fisherman's Peninsula near Petsamo where the frontier had been clumsily drawn. As compensation the Russians offered a district of Soviet Karelia which was twice as large as the area to be ceded to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was also prepared to withdraw objections to the remilitarization of the Aaland Islands provided no other power, including Sweden, took part in the fortifications.⁹

At this point the meeting broke up to be resumed two days later. On October 14 Paasikivi began by reading a statement in which he attempted to show that no peril threatened the Gulf of Finland. He concluded by stating that Finland would, however, be willing to

⁹Jakobson, Diplomacy, pp. 115-16.

discuss those islands lying closest to the Russian border. This offer was held to be not worth discussing. Stalin stated that the Soviet Union already had cannon which had a range greater than the distance from the frontier to Leningrad and Finland could secure similar ones. But it was largely because of the war raging in the west that the Soviet Union sought to obtain complete security.

At that point Stalin made a long and rather interesting statement:

" It is not the fault of either of us that geographical circumstances are as they are. We must be able to bar entrance to the Gulf of Finland. If the channel to Leningrad did not run along your coast, we would not have the slightest occasion to bring the matter up ... You ask what power might attack us, England or Germany. We are on good terms with Germany now, but everything in this world may change. Yudenich attacked through the Gulf of Finland and later the British did the same. This can happen again As things stand now, both England and Germany can send large naval units into the Gulf of Finland We ask that the distance from Leningrad to the line should be seventy kilometers. That is our minimum demand, and you must not think we are prepared to reduce it bit by bit. We can't move Leningrad, so the line has to move We ask for 2,700 square kilometers and offer more than 5,500 in exchange. Does any other great power do that? No. We are the only ones that simple."¹⁰

Paasikivi restated Finland's position that she could not allow any portions of her territory to be converted into military bases of any great power.

¹⁰Tanner, Winter War, pp. 27-28.

The conversation was reconstructed from the notes of the interpreter who attended the discussion. Yudenich refers to one of the White generals of the Russian civil war following the 1917 Revolution.

There appears to be some indications that Stalin and Molotov only sought what was minimum for the protection of Russia and, above all, Leningrad. During this stage of the talks Molotov had intimated to Paasikivi that should he listen to his military advisors he would be asking for the frontier of Peter the Great which included the entire province of Karelia within Russia. The irony is that Molotov was in all probability speaking the truth, since the Soviet Union insisted on this frontier in the subsequent peace settlement. Stalin was content not to ask for the bases on the Aaland Islands which only two months previously had been an important part of the defence plans presented to the British and French during the military talks between the three countries. It is quite conceivable that Stalin refrained from demanding these bases in order not to alarm Sweden, thus reducing the chances of Finland obtaining aid from that quarter against Soviet pressure.¹¹

The October 14 meeting was the last that Paasikivi conducted by himself. He returned to Helsinki on the sixteenth having promised that he would return to Moscow as soon as possible.

Paasikivi waited in Helsinki while President Kallio and Foreign Minister Erkko went to Stockholm for the meeting of the heads of state of the Scandinavian countries. They hoped to solicit aid against the Soviet pressure but the question was never raised. When Erkko did attempt to broach the subject with various ministers of the Swedish Government he was told that under present circumstances

¹¹Jakobson, Diplomacy, pp. 118-19.

Sweden could not commit herself.¹² After Kallio and Erkkö returned to Helsinki the Cabinet met to formulate a reply to the Russian demands. The draft was completed on October 21: Finland would be willing to discuss some of the Gulf of Finland Islands, minor frontier rectifications on the Karelian Isthmus could be accommodated, the reply to the lease of Hanko was explicitly negative and the Fisherman's Peninsula in the north was not mentioned at all.¹³ It was also decided that when Paasikivi returned to Moscow he would be accompanied by the Minister of Finance, Väinö Tanner.

Tanner and Paasikivi left for Moscow on October 22. In the first meeting, the following day, Stalin appeared genuinely surprised that the Finns rejected his offer. He took a pencil and drew a line across the map signifying a new frontier proposal saying this was the best he could do. This line was only slightly less than what the Russians had originally asked for and included virtually the whole Finnish defence line. The Finns rejected the offer and the meeting ended. It appeared that the negotiations had been broken off permanently but hardly had Tanner and Paasikivi returned to their Legation before the phone rang summoning them to another meeting at 11 p.m. that same evening. The Russians still wanted Hanko but would keep it heavily manned only while the war lasted after which a small detachment of 1,000 men would remain there for the thirty-year lease period. Tanner and Paasikivi volunteered that they did not believe even this would

¹²Wuorinen, Finland and World War II, pp. 120-21.

¹³Tanner, Winter War, pp. 33-35.

be acceptable to the Finnish Government but would return to Helsinki for new instructions.¹⁴

On the morning of October 26 Tanner and Paasikivi arrived back in Helsinki. There was no way that the current Soviet proposals for Hanko could be accepted and a text to that effect was drafted within the first few days to be submitted to the Russians. At this point the various party leaders in the Diet were informed about the negotiations with the Russians for the first time. Those members who were informed unilaterally endorsed the Government's action.

On October 31, more than a week after the Russians had expected their return, Tanner and Paasikivi started their third trip to Moscow. By now the main thought in Finland was the retention of Hanko; it was believed that agreement could be concluded with respect to the Isthmus, Gulf of Finland islands and the Petsamo area. While Tanner and Paasikivi were en route to the Soviet Union Molotov had made a detailed radio speech of the demands the Russians had made upon Finland. Foreign Minister Erkkö had therefore stopped the Finnish negotiating team on the border and suggested their return to the capital. In the meantime, however, a Cabinet meeting in Helsinki had decided to leave it up to Tanner and Paasikivi whether they return or continue on to Moscow. Finland had constantly sought to keep the negotiations secret so as not to make national prestige a factor in the talks. When the Diet members had been informed of the negotiations they too had been sworn to secrecy. Now, in an effort to make the demands a fait accompli, the Russians had exposed the negotiations to world opinion!

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 40-43.

The prestige of the Soviet Union was committed and Stalin would no longer be in a position to accept terms that were less than Molotov had mentioned in his speech. In his speech, however, Molotov had not mentioned Hanko by name but had merely spoken of a naval base at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland -- this was to prove very important in the talks that followed. The logical thing following Molotov's speech would be for the Finnish negotiators to return to Helsinki to consider the events and decide on what course to follow. Tanner and Paasikivi had only been authorized to offer a new frontier on the Isthmus which was less than the Russians wanted and the Finnish half of the Fisherman's Peninsula in the north. After the speech no hope remained that agreement could be reached on the basis of the Finnish offerings. Therefore, there was no logical reason for continuing to Moscow except that Finland was unwilling to take the responsibility for breaking off the negotiations. Tanner and Paasikivi conferred and decided to go to Moscow. Tanner subsequently admits that this was a mistake; they should have returned to Helsinki to receive broader authority from their Government.¹⁵

Tanner and Paasikivi arrived back in Moscow and their first meeting with Molotov took place November 2. The Finnish proposals were rejected by Molotov who emphasized the importance of Hanko to Soviet defences. The meeting broke up with Molotov saying that, "now it is the turn of the military to have their say."¹⁶ In the meeting

¹⁵Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 66-67.

the following night Stalin was again among the participants. The Finns again refused to give up Hanko and to their surprise Stalin proposed an alternative. Rather than obtaining Hanko Stalin was now willing to have use of three small islands to the east of it. The meeting ended to be resumed when Tanner and Paasikivi had received new instructions with regard to the three islands east of Hanko. Here lay the significance of Molotov's failure to mention Hanko in his radio speech. Tanner and Paasikivi felt that Stalin had kept this proposal in reserve and this was his minimum demand in apparent desire to come to agreement. Unfortunately, in Helsinki Stalin's proposal was interpreted as a sign of softening and the decision was made to stand firm. Tanner and Paasikivi were accordingly informed not to give any territory in the west to the Russians. When the two negotiators asked whether they might be allowed to break off talks if no agreement was forthcoming they were told to do so. This was insane -- before their last departure for Moscow Paasikivi had been told by Mannerheim that they had to come to an agreement since the army could not fight.¹⁷

The next meeting was held in the evening of November 9. It was a short meeting. Paasikivi began by reading a statement in which it was pointed out that the reasons for rejecting the Soviet offer pertaining to Hanko also applied to the islands east of the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 74.

peninsula. Stalin attempted to get just one of the islands. Again the answer was in the negative. A short discussion followed on the Gulf of Finland islands and the Isthmus but nothing was decided. The meeting ended; negotiations had been broken off.

That same evening a letter arrived from Molotov. An inconspicuous detail had provoked Molotov to write the letter.¹⁸ Molotov's objection would not change matters but appeared to be indicative of Russia's desire not to have a rupture in the talks. Stalin and Molotov were obviously anxious to reach an agreement with the Finns; negotiations had repeatedly been broken off in view of lack of any agreement between the two parties, only to be reopened by the Russians.

The following day Tanner and Paasikivi answered Molotov's letter in an affirmative manner. The letter was delivered but no inclination of a resumption of the talks was indicated by the Russians. Nothing was heard for three days so another letter was sent to Molotov on November 13 thanking him for the friendliness with which the Finnish delegation had been treated during the negotiations. The purpose of the letter was to keep the door open for future negotiations. Late the same night Tanner and Paasikivi left Moscow.

In the week that followed Tanner and Paasikivi's return to Helsinki, Finland enjoyed what has been described as a time of 'phoney peace', a period when the reservists were sent home and people returned

¹⁸Ibid., p. 77.

The letter referred to a Finnish aide-memoire in which it was stated that Finland could not grant military bases within its own territory. Molotov was now saying that if the territory of Hanko was sold or exchanged for Soviet territory then it would be no longer Finnish and the objection no longer valid.

to the cities, a period when one did not expect war nor peace but waited to see what would develop.¹⁹ It was in this atmosphere that the Mainila incident occurred on November 26. Mainila was a small village on the Russian side of the border. At 3:45 p.m. seven artillery shells landed among the Soviet troops stationed there killing four and wounding nine. The Russians immediately lodged a sharp protest with the Finnish Ambassador in Moscow emphasizing the grave danger Leningrad found itself in because of its proximity to the border.²⁰ The Finns began an immediate investigation to determine the origin of the incident. It was discovered that the exploding shells had been visible from the Finnish side of the frontier and that, judging from the sound of the firing, the guns were situated some one and a half to two kilometers to the south-east of Mainila in Soviet territory. This was noted in a logbook by a Finnish border guard as the incident occurred.²¹ Furthermore, the Finnish artillery had been placed so far behind their lines that their shells could not reach the border. Molotov demanded that Finnish forces be withdrawn far behind their own lines in spite of the fact that hardly any one but border guards was near the border in the first place. The Finns replied by suggesting that both sides should withdraw their troops.

¹⁹Jakobson, Diplomacy, p. 140.

²⁰Jane Degras, Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy, vol. III, 1933-1941, London, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 401.

²¹Tanner, Winter War, p. 86.

On November 28, the Soviet Union delivered a note to the Finnish Ambassador in Moscow which stated that the Soviet Union was aware that the Finnish Government concentrated a large number of troops in the immediate neighbourhood of Leningrad. Because the Finns refused to withdraw these troops an unfriendly act had been committed against the Soviet Union which was not in accord with the Non-Aggression Pact that existed between the two countries. The 'criminal' firing directed against Soviet forces by Finnish artillery showed that Finland wished to maintain her hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union, that she did not intend to comply with the requirements of the Non-Aggression Pact, and that she had decided to continue the threat to Leningrad. In view of all these circumstances the Soviet Union considered itself obliged to inform the Finnish Government that henceforth it would not regard itself bound by the terms of the Non-Aggression Pact.²²

The following day the Finns prepared a note objecting to the termination of the Non-Aggression Pact -- which under the terms of the agreement was not allowed till 1945 -- and stated that they would be willing to reach an agreement whereby Finnish troops were withdrawn from the Karelian Isthmus.²³ Before the note could be delivered the Russians sent a note terminating diplomatic relations.

²²Ibid., p. 87.

Degras, Soviet Documents, pp. 402-3.

²³Tanner, Winter War, p. 88.

On the morning of November 30, without a declaration of war, the Soviet Union attacked Finland by land, sea and air. Already on the previous day, November 29, the Soviet forces had pushed across the Finnish frontier at Petsamo and had captured some border guards. The attack of the Red Army was carried out along a wide front on the Karelian Isthmus and from Lake Ladoga to the Arctic. Finland prepared to resist.

When war broke out between Finland and the Soviet Union, Germany maintained a policy of benevolent neutrality toward Russia; official neutrality was maintained while arms from Italy and Western Europe and volunteers from Hungary were prevented from reaching Finland. At the same time the German Government seriously considered recognizing the Communist Kuusinen government.²⁴ Right from the beginning Germany had been most interested in the negotiations between the Finnish and Soviet Governments. It would not be wrong to say that Germany was torn between her natural desire to aid Finland against Communism as she had done at the end of the First World War and the agreement that existed between Germany and the Soviet Union as to their respective spheres of influence in the Baltic. From the moment that the Russo-Finnish negotiations began Germany expressed complete disinterest in the fate of Finland, and the German Foreign Office

²⁴This was a bogus Finnish government established by Moscow for the purpose of 'inviting' Soviet troops to enter Finland and for the purpose of, eventually, ruling a Communist Finland.

instructed all German missions abroad to avoid any gestures which might be interpreted as sympathy for the Finns or enmity towards the Russians. The Germans, of course, were not blind to the fact that the Russian objectives in the negotiations with Finland were directed towards protection against Germany. But at this moment it was extremely important that Germany not become involved in hostilities with the Soviet Union. It was important because: a military decision was still awaited in the west, the Soviet Union was supplying many of Germany's economic needs and Communist demonstrations against the Allies' war with Germany were of some benefit to the Germans. In the war itself, Germany was pro-Russian. Early in December the Russians asked that German ships going to North Sweden supply food and fuel for Soviet submarines operating in the Gulf of Bothnia while blockading Finland. Germany fully agreed to this measure — which was totally unneutral — and deeply regretted the lost potential of reciprocity when the Russians later withdrew the request.²⁵ But the Germans were not the only ones to become embroiled in the Russo-Finnish war.

Sweden, more than anyone else, did everything within her power to aid the Finns during their war with the Russians. Sweden practised what might be termed 'non-belligerent interventionism'; she sent considerable quantities of arms to Finland and permitted the recruitment of volunteers in Sweden. There were a number of

²⁵Gerhard L. Weinberg, Germany and the Soviet Union 1939-1941, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1954, pp. 174-75, Appendix I.

reasons for this extensive aid: probably the most important was the cultural and ethnic link with the Finns and the Swedish minority in Finland, and there was the fear in military circles in Sweden that the Russo-Finnish conflict would inevitably spread to the Scandinavian peninsula.²⁶ The Swedes accordingly had placed their own troops on the Aaland Islands early in the war to prevent their capture by the Russians. About \$125,000,000 worth of gifts and loans were extended to the Finns in addition to 90,000 rifles, 42,000,000 rounds of ammunition, 80 anti-tank guns, one-fifth of the Swedish air force, as well as most of the Finnish artillery ammunition.²⁷ A total of nine thousand fully equipped volunteers from Sweden fought in the war and some 20,000 more were preparing to go to the front when hostilities ended. All this left Sweden's resources very inadequate when she prepared to meet the new threat of the German invasion of Norway and Denmark in April 1940. Other nations also came to the aid of Finland. There was a loan of \$30,000,000 from the United States although the Americans refused to sell any arms to the Finns since this would constitute a violation of American neutrality.²⁸ Shortly thereafter the neutrality policy was changed to allow for the sale of arms to the United Kingdom. Britain sent 114 guns, 185,000 shells, 50,000 grenades, 15,700 aerial bombs, and 100,000 coats. The French contribution consisted of 175 planes, 472 guns,

²⁶GD VIII No. 511.

²⁷O. Fritiof Ander, The Building of Modern Sweden, Rock Island, Ill., Augustana Book Concern, 1958, p. 227.

²⁸Wuorinen, Finland and World War II, p. 68.

795,000 shells, 5,000 machine guns, 200,000 grenades and 20,000,000 cartridges.²⁹ Altogether, there were some 11,500 volunteers from almost thirty nations, although most came from Sweden. With the Swedish corps were 725 Norwegians who also took part in the fighting. A Danish battalion of 800 men was on its way to the front when peace was signed while the 800 men of the Finnish-American Legion saw action on the last day of the war. Hungary's contribution, a battalion, arrived too late to fight and the volunteers from twenty-six nations, forming the 'Foreign Legion' were still being trained when the war ended.³⁰

As was mentioned above, the Allies also proposed to send aid to the Finns although they were more concerned with the by-product of such action, namely the interruption of the ore traffic to Germany. But the Allies, admittedly, were also concerned with preventing the Soviet Union from yielding extensive material aid to Germany and hoped to stop this by aiding the Finns with men and material against the Red Army.³¹ The two Scandinavian kingdoms, Norway and Sweden, prevented the Allies from sending their 'volunteers' to Finland but did agree, in January, to allow the passage of war material from Britain and

²⁹Fleming, Cold War, p. 101.

³⁰Jakobson, Diplomacy, p. 273 note no. 32. Some discrepancy exists regarding the number of volunteers in the Winter War. Jakobson's figures if, perhaps, not totally accurate nonetheless give a good indication of the origins of the volunteers. Jakobson only credits Sweden with 8,000 volunteers whereas most other sources place the figure at 9,000.

³¹Henning Friis, ed., Scandinavia Between East and West, New York, Cornell University Press, 1950., p. 278.

France. Norway and Sweden acted against the proposed Allied expeditionary force for a number of reasons: first, the proposed act was openly unneutral and while most Scandinavians were pro-Allied they did not want to become embroiled in the world war; second, Germany told Norway and Sweden in unequivocal language that if Allied troops (as distinct from volunteers) entered Norway or Sweden, Germany would interfere³²; and third, the Soviet Government remonstrated very strongly in Norway and Sweden against alleged unneutral acts on their part in permitting Allied transit to Finland.³³

When war broke out Finland fought valiantly and with a certain amount of initial success though Finnish fighting strength was only about 200,000 men.³⁴ At first, only the Leningrad military district was involved in the aggression against Finland but when these troops were constantly repulsed, seasoned troops from the Eastern Soviet Union were brought in and the Finnish line waivered. Before the war ended, the peace of March 12, Finland attempted to obtain aid from the defunct League of Nations. On December 3, 1939, the Finnish representative at Geneva, Holsti, invoked Article XI and XV of the League Covenant and requested the convening of both the Council and the Assembly in order to ask them to take action against

³²Medlicott, Economic Blockade, p. 191.

³³Koht, Norway, Neutral, p. 28.

³⁴Churchill, Gathering Storm, p. 541.

the Soviet aggression. It was thought in Helsinki that an appeal to the League might be worthwhile in that it would present Finland's case to world opinion and would serve as a means of establishing contact once again with the Soviet Government. Finland was not necessarily committed to seeking the expulsion of the Soviet Union from the League since this might effect the terms of peace. The Soviet Union protested the calling of the Council and Assembly to discuss the Finnish appeal saying Russia was not at war with Finland -- which to them was represented by the Kuusinen government.³⁵

On December 14, a vote of the members of the League of Nations expelled the Soviet Union. The expulsion was urged primarily by Argentina and the other Latin American members. It was ironic that the degree of insistence with which a country urged the expulsion of the Soviet Union was directly related to the distance of that country from the Soviet borders. Shortly thereafter, Secretary-General Avenol, was asked why Germany and Italy had not been expelled for their acts of aggression. Avenol answered that the League existed because the Great Powers kept it alive and he did what they told him to do.³⁶ One wonders if the League's action would have been the same if Russia had not been communistic but merely Great Russian and

³⁵Degras, Soviet Documents, pp. 410-11.

³⁶James Barros, Betrayal from Within, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1969, p. 205.

acting in the same aggressive manner.³⁷ After all, the League had tolerated aggression by Japan, Italy and Germany.

³⁷The expulsion was of questionable legality. Nothing in the Covenant of the League specifies that a country could place itself outside the League by virtue of its actions -- "by its act, the U.S.S.R. has placed itself outside of the League of Nations." Neither was the expulsion of the unanimous decision of the Council: of the fourteen members, seven voted for expulsion, five abstained, and two were wilfully absent. Abstention and absence should not be taken to imply an affirmative vote! Fleming, Cold War, pp. 99-100.

CHAPTER V

Operation Weseruebung and the Aftermath

On November 30, neutrality had abruptly ceased for the small nation of Finland. During the few months of Finland's heroic defence the remaining three Scandinavian States strove to maintain a precarious policy of neutrality. Hardly had the peace between Finland and the Soviet Union been signed — ending Finnish neutrality — before the remaining Scandinavians found their neutrality at an end. On April 9, forces of the Third Reich invaded the peaceful kingdoms of Norway and Denmark. The Germans beat the Allies in bringing war to Scandinavia. The day before the German invasion, the British Royal Navy laid a minefield in Norwegian waters and waited for expected German reaction whereupon an Allied force would land in Norway and secure the country. The German 'reaction' was more than the British could handle. Sweden was never invaded — there was no need! With an occupied Denmark and Norway to the south and west and an increasingly German-oriented Finland to the east there existed no choice for Sweden save cooperation with Germany until such time as it would be safe to terminate any temporary agreements that were made.

The plan for the German invasion of Denmark and Norway was termed 'Operation Weseruebung' and was the brain-child, if not the passion of Admiral Raeder of the German Navy. Raeder was initially introduced to the scheme by Admiral Carls, third-ranking officer in the German Navy.¹ The invasion of Denmark and Norway was to be the

¹William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, New York, Simon and Shuster, 1960, pp. 673-74. Shirer quotes Raeder at Nuremberg as testifying that Carls peppered him with letters suggesting the occupation of the Norwegian coast by Germany.

only act of military aggression by Germany in which the German Navy played a decisive role. The plan was never Hitler's, in fact, he had to be persuaded to embark upon it. His instruments of persuasion were Raeder and Rosenberg. The former because he rightly saw the immense strategical value of occupying Norway, the latter because he wanted to cultivate his political connections in Norway, particularly with the future traitor, Quisling. Initially Sweden was to be included. Herman Rauschnig, former Nazi President of the Senate of Danzig, states in his memoirs that in the spring of 1934 Hitler had told him that, should war come, one of his first acts would be to occupy Sweden.² As late as February 26, 1940, it was assumed that 'Operation Weseruebung' would include Sweden. It was only when Hitler gave the orders for the plan to be put into execution that Sweden was excluded.³ Why was Sweden suddenly left free from invasion? 'Operation Weseruebung' was launched in a situation where the armament industry was heavily dependent on Swedish iron ore and Professor Karlbom of Sweden believes that cessation of these deliveries because of war conditions or by sabotage in reaction to invasion would have had grave consequences for German armaments production.⁴ Therefore, in order to insure continued deliveries, Hitler decided against an invasion of Sweden.

The preparations for 'Operation Weseruebung' began one month after the outbreak of the Second World War. When war had begun in

²Karlbom, "Sweden's Iron Ore", SEHR, vol. XIII, p. 72.

³Ibid., p. 73. The orders were given on March 1, 1940. No evidence has availed itself to throw light on the reasons for Hitler's deletion of Sweden from the operation.

⁴Loc. cit.

September, 1939, the German Navy had, as in the First World War, been boxed in by the effective British blockade running from the British isles, through the Shetland Islands and to the coast of Norway. It was while searching for a means of increasing the German Navy's power of attack that Raeder arrived at the conclusion that this could best be achieved by obtaining bases in Norway from which to hit at British sea routes. Raeder accordingly asked his Naval Staff to prepare a report with the view of obtaining bases in Norway, initially peaceably under the combined pressure of Germany and the Soviet Union but to include an estimation of the resistance with which force might be met.⁵

On October 10, Raeder made first mention of his proposals for Scandinavia to Hitler. The War Diary of the Naval War Staff records that Hitler intended to consider the question.⁶ There the matter rested till December save for the introduction into the affair of Quisling by Rosenberg.

Vidkun Quisling was a reserve major in the Norwegian Army. He had initially been pro-Bolshevist as a result of his experiences in the Soviet Union at the time of the revolution but swung to the opposite extreme and founded his National Union in 1934. In June, 1939, he came into contact with Rosenberg who subsequently supplied him with funds. In return, Quisling warned Rosenberg of British designs on Norway and pledged his support to the German cause. In

⁵GD VIII No. 188.
Trials X, p. 750.

⁶Trials X, p. 752.

the following months, with the outbreak of the Second World War and the Russo-Finnish War, Rosenberg and Quisling were in almost continual touch through intermediaries. Quisling continued to warn Germany of the imminent danger from Britain in which he saw Norway. Finally, on December 11, Raeder and Quisling met. Quisling again voiced his Anglophobia and proposed to put his own organization at the disposal of Germany. Raeder was impressed. The next day Raeder saw Hitler for whom he arranged a meeting with Quisling.⁷

By December the Russo-Finnish War was giving rise to alarm. Allied aid in the form of an expeditionary force was being proposed and it was no secret that this force would occupy the Swedish ore fields en route to Finland. Furthermore, by entering Norway, the Allies would also stop all shipments of ore emanating from Narvik even if the ore fields themselves were not occupied. Churchill advocated that the Royal Navy be allowed to transgress Norwegian neutrality by entering Norwegian waters in an attempt to stop vessels carrying ore to Germany which were hugging Norway's neutral coast line. Although the threat posed by the Allied expeditionary force to seize the Swedish ore fields soon subsided with the end of the Russo-Finnish War, the threat of an Allied invasion of Norway or the introduction of the Royal Navy into Norwegian waters still remained. In such an atmosphere Raeder impressed upon Hitler

⁷Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, p. 741.

⁸GD VIII No. 537.

the need to eventually carry out an occupation of Norway, and stressed that the present time was favourable.

In the last weeks of 1939 a handful of officers at OKW began work on 'Study North' as 'Weseruebung' was first called. Within the Navy opinion was divided: the Chief of Naval Staff, Raeder, was firmly convinced that England intended to occupy Norway in the near future while the Operations Division of the Naval Staff disagreed. The Operations Division did not believe Britain capable of such an action at the present time and foresaw the great risks and difficulties such an operation would involve for Britain. The occupation would bring Britain into opposition with the Soviet Union and would call forth severe countermeasures from Germany.⁸ The attitude of the Navy and the result of 'Study North', with which OKW presented Hitler in the middle of January, was unsatisfactory. Accordingly, on January 27, Hitler gave orders for further work to be done on 'Study North' under his "personal and immediate influence" and under the heading of Keitel. The project was now given the code name: 'Weseruebung.'⁹ From this point on, the invasion of Norway and Denmark was an accepted project being planned through normal channels; it was no longer the personal project of the small group of individuals who had been trying to persuade Hitler of the merit of their proposal.

On February 17, the 'Altmark' incident, wherein a number of British prisoners aboard a German ship were freed by the Royal Navy

⁸GD VIII No. 537.

⁹Trials X, pp. 753-54.

in Norwegian waters, took place. This incident enraged Hitler and within four days he had obtained the appointment of General Falkenhorst as commander of 'Weseruebung'. The time for hesitation and study was over!

Falkenhorst was given five divisions to complete the occupation; Quisling's role would be insignificant.¹⁰ Germany would not enjoy supremacy at sea and everything would depend on the element of surprise.

Hitler's order for the invasion of Norway and Denmark came on March 1, 1940. The operation was to prevent British encroachment on Scandinavia and the Baltic as well as to secure the ore base in Sweden and to give the Navy and Air Force a wider start line against Britain.¹¹ Two days later, on March 3, Hitler decided that 'Operation Weseruebung' would precede the offensive in the west.¹²

The days of March were fraught with frantic preparation for the proposed invasion. The entry in the War Diary of the Naval War Staff for March 4 reads that Hitler had given orders that all planning for the operation was to be concluded by March 10 after which action could begin with a preparatory period of four days!¹³ Hitler hesitated in giving the order for the attack. He needed an excuse. Finally, after much hesitation, Hitler gave the order.

¹⁰Falkenhorst was later allocated six divisions for Norway and two for Denmark.

¹¹Trials, X, pp. 761ff.

¹²Shirer, Rise and Fall, p. 682.

¹³Trials X, p. 765.

Jodl's diary recorded the event in the entry for April 2: "Fuehrer orders carrying out of the Weser Exercise for April 9th."¹⁴ Raeder records the decision for the invasion as having been made on March 16 at a military conference held by Hitler. The German Admiral expressed concern over British action in Norwegian waters and the continuous attempt by the Allies to disrupt the traffic from Narvik. In view of what he saw as impending British action he stated that, "Sooner or later Germany will be faced with the necessity of carrying out the Weser operation."¹⁵ The justification for the invasion, according to the texts handed the Governments of Denmark and Norway during the attack, alleged that the Allies, themselves, were planning an attack and had been guilty of breaching international law through their maritime warfare.¹⁶ It is unlikely that the Germans actually knew of the plans of imminent British action against Norway but it is extremely likely that numerous German military leaders, among them Raeder, foresaw that the Allies would have to act against the vital iron ore supply-line. The Germans saw that the British would not long desist from attempting to permanently stop the Narvik traffic. That the plans of both sides actually coincided was accidental with neither side having conclusive foreknowledge of the other's intention.

When Hitler gave the order for the invasion of Denmark and Norway the Allies were already planning their own course of action

¹⁵Churchill, Gathering Storm, p. 572.

¹⁶Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, pp. 750ff.

for Scandinavia. On April 3, after much thought, the British cabinet had authorized the Royal Navy to mine Norwegian waters on April 8; that is, the day preceeding the German action.¹⁷ It was presumed that the Allied mining of Norwegian waters would provoke German reprisals in which event a British brigade and a French contingent would be sent to Norway and would advance on Sweden in order to bring about a break in the ore traffic.¹⁸

The Allied plan was conceived in response to the ore traffic. While plans were already being formulated for possible action in Norway the case for intervention was strengthened by a report from Herr Fritz Thyssen, the exiled German industrialist, which stated that plants in the Ruhr were shut down for three days of the week because of lack of Swedish iron ore. A week after the arrival of Thyssen's report, on March 27, the British Cabinet had decided that formal notice should warn the Scandinavian countries that the Allies would not allow the course of the war to turn against themselves because of respect for Scandinavian neutrality. Norway and Sweden were accordingly warned on April 5.¹⁹ Since the Baltic ore route would shortly open, any action which the Allies might contemplate would only serve a psychological purpose. Nevertheless, the Allied action was planned for April 8.

Both the German and British plans were aggressive in spirit. In both cases foreign troops would land in a neutral country for the

¹⁷ Churchill, Gathering Storm, p. 579.

¹⁸ Loc. cit.

¹⁹ Medlicott, Economic Blockade, p. 192.

purpose of occupation. However, the British plan did differ significantly from the German one in one respect. While both actions would involve armed force the Allied contingent was extremely small and anticipated that very little resistance would meet them. Should the Norwegians offer resistance to the landings the Allied force was to withdraw rather than force its entry into the country.

The British plan, called R.4, required three naval forces, two of which would lay actual mine-fields and the third which would make a dummy field. Further to this, a plan existed for the embarkation of a military force of eight battalions to land in Norway if there was evidence of a hostile German reaction to the mining. The Norwegian Government was informed of the action in the morning of April 8, and protested vehemently and prepared counter action. At this point news that the German fleet was out reached the British Admiralty and the mining operation was abandoned piecemeal to prepare for the expected engagement. The Allied landing force was disembarked in Scotland on the orders of the Admiralty without the knowledge, and to the surprise, of the Prime Minister.

The entire British planning was clumsily and hastily done. To confuse matters further, the Admiralty had independently decided to abandon what remained of the plan in favor of a naval engagement with the enemy which failed to materialize. Allied planners were by now out of touch with reality; they were beset with the objective of a naval engagement with the enemy in which the enemy would be decisively beaten. One bright light remained, however. This was Vice-Admiral Horton, commander of submarines. Already on March 29,

he had informed his submarine commanders that he expected a strong German reaction to the mining of Norwegian waters. Accordingly all available submarines were ordered into the German approach routes to Norway. It was here that British and Allied submarines met the German invasion fleet bearing neutral markings. Unfortunately, the opportunity was lost. The submarines were not allowed to sink any of the vessels till the afternoon of the ninth when the invasion had already begun. Although by this time nothing could stop the invasion the submarines, nevertheless, managed to inflict heavy casualties on the German Navy which it could ill afford.²⁰

While the British were frantically abandoning their plan in order to meet the Germans, the Norwegians were protesting the laying of the mines. Because of the weather conditions mines were only laid in the Vest Fjord, guarding Narvik, and Norway informed the Allies that if these were not removed within forty-eight hours the Norwegian Navy would be sent to do the job. The invasion by Germany the following day ended the matter.²¹

The German invasion of Denmark and Norway would include all three arms of the armed forces: land, air and sea. Denmark alone would be attacked from land, sea and air, while Norway was invaded primarily by sea-borne troops assisted by a strong air detachment. Already on April 2, part of the German invasion force had begun its sea voyage to Norway with the main invasion force following the evening of the sixth. The invasion force was organized

²⁰Moulton, Norwegian Campaign, pp. 71-73.

²¹Koht, Norway, Neutral, pp. 49-50.

into eleven sea groups:

Group I - Narvik: Ten destroyers, two battleships, and 2,000 troops.

Group II - Trondheim: Four destroyers, a heavy cruiser, and 1,700 troops.

Group III - Bergen: Miscellaneous smaller vessels and 1,900 troops.

Group IV - Kristiansand and Arendal: Small vessels and 1,100 troops.

Group V - Oslo: A heavy and light cruiser, a pocket battleship, miscellaneous smaller vessels and 2,000 troops.

Group VI - Egersund: Four minesweepers and 150 troops.

Group VII-XI - Denmark: A total of 1,400 troops.²²

Simultaneously with these sea assaults, parachute units would land to secure various air fields in both countries. Furthermore, various 'innocent' transports loaded with troops would arrive in Norwegian harbours and await the attack. These were the slower vessels which had left Germany on April 2. Following the attack, a contingent of fifteen transports would dock in certain Norwegian harbours. Further troop movements would only be directed towards Oslo. In Denmark, while Groups VII-XI landed there would also be simultaneous landings by parachute units as well as a land offensive from the south. A total of 1,212 aircrafts would be used in the attack.

In the early morning of April 9, after news of the Allied act of aggression, i.e. the mining of Norwegian waters, had become known the German invasion force attacked Norway and Denmark. In both

²²Moulton, Norwegian Campaign, pp. 63-64.

countries the surprise was total; in Denmark so much so that the Danish Government and King were unable to escape from the Germans. That the surprise was so great is of interest since the imminence of the invasion was no secret. In the international community the invasion of April 9 did not come with any surprise. The Dutch Foreign Ministry was aware of the invasion as much as a week before the fact and, furthermore, had been told by its source that this infringement against Denmark and Norway would be followed by a large scale offensive in the West, possibly through Belgium and Holland!²³ The Americans were informed about the invasions on the sixth and the same source also indicates that British military circles were aware of German troop concentrations pointing at an early invasion of Jutland.²⁴ In fact, Churchill states that the War Cabinet was informed of the German invasion preparations on April 3 by the Secretary of State for War though the British Government felt these troops and transports were in readiness to counteract a possible attack by the allies.²⁵ Sweden, in informing the Germans that they did not fear any Allied aggression in the near future divulged their knowledge of huge German troop build-ups in northern German ports and voiced their apprehensions about a German attack on Scandinavia.²⁶ Denmark was reportedly informed of the invasion ten days before the event by her naval attache in Berlin but did not believe the intelli-

²³U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations, 1940 vol. 1, p.148.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 141-42.

²⁵Churchill, Gathering Storm, pp. 581-82.

²⁶GD IX No. 47.

gence.²⁷ In the last few days before the invasion reports poured into Oslo and Copenhagen about the danger. No heed was taken. When, on April 8, the Allies cancelled their own operation to meet the danger posed by the German invasion fleet Denmark and Norway refused to take warning. On the evening of April 8 the Ministers of the Danish Government went to bed as free men; the next morning they woke in an occupied country! In Norway, because of the size of the country and the poorer roads, the German advance was slower and the King and Government managed to escape to Great Britain.

Why was no action taken to prevent the invasion? Granted, there was little that either country could really have done but the situation was such that no one was worried about the attack from the south. Why? As in the First World War, Denmark once again hoped to stay out of world conflict and, once again, trade agreements had been signed which, if they were not as profitable as in 1914-1918, were such that Denmark would suffer no need. Neither Norway or Denmark believed that Germany would move against the northern countries which were relatively cooperative in their relations with the Third Reich. This was also the time when Germany was still facing a strong France and Britain in the west. But perhaps the most important reason, particularly with respect to Denmark, was the fear of giving Germany any concern or excuse to attack the Scandinavian countries. Therefore, rather than strengthen the border troops, which might have given cause for alarm in Germany, and would have

²⁷Hans Kirchhoff, Henrik S. Nissen and Henning Poulsen, Besaettelsestidens historie, Copenhagen, Danmarks Radios Grundbøger, 1964, p. 34.

been largely ineffective, the Danes chose to do nothing. This constant fear of a hostile reaction was prevalent in Scandinavia throughout this period. In 1940 Denmark and Norway chose not to assure their own defence because this might invoke an attack from Germany, just as in 1939 Sweden and Finland had stopped their proposed cooperation in defending the Aaland Islands because Germany, and particularly the Soviet Union, against whom this defence was directed, had objected. It is difficult to justify this attitude. This can only be seen as an attempt to stay out of any war at whatever cost -- if you do your utmost not to offend anyone they will have no motive for attacking you. There is some truth in this. Hitler was concerned with having an excuse for moving against Denmark and Norway when he was preparing to launch 'Operation Weseruebung'. But an excuse was found.

The invasion began in the early hours of April 9. The German Ambassador in the respective capitals of Denmark and Norway called upon the Foreign Minister at 4 a.m. (local time) with a set of demands that had to be met.²⁸ The respective Scandinavian Governments were told that Germany had documentary proof that the Allies were planning an imminent invasion of Denmark and Norway. In Norway the reaction to the presentation made by the German Ambassador was swift. A meeting of the Cabinet (Council of Ministers) was called in the Foreign Ministry and within a few minutes the German

²⁸
GD IX No. 53. The enclosure deals with the demands put on Norway. The demands on Denmark were largely the same except for Paragraph 8 of the presented note which deals with the suspension of the ferry service between Denmark and Sweden.

note was answered: "We will not submit voluntarily; the struggle is already under way."²⁹ In Denmark the German Ambassador there presented himself at the same hour to the Danish Foreign Minister. Here the reaction was entirely different; after a short Cabinet meeting the Danes accepted the demands while registering a protest against the German action.³⁰

There was really no question of resisting the Germans. When the invasion came Norway had about 13,000 men under arms, of whom nearly one-half were in the far north. In Denmark the situation was similar, with 14,500 men.³¹ In neither case could the country consider any real resistance. Denmark gave up having hardly fired a single shot. Virtually all the fighting in Denmark took place near the border in Jutland and with Danish troops that could not be reached by their superiors. In other words, the only Danes who fought the invaders were those who could not be contacted by their officers and told to desist. Thirteen Danish Troops were killed in the fight with the overwhelming enemy.³² In Norway the situation was different, and for a number of reasons. Resistance to the German invader began almost immediately in Norway; in fact, fighting broke out around midnight on the night of April 8-9, four hours before the invasion was scheduled to begin. The German heavy cruiser, 'Bluecher', was sunk upon entering Oslofjord. This slowed the assault on the capital and

²⁹Ibid., No. 65.

³⁰Ibid., No. 66.

³¹Derry, Campaign in Norway, p. 7.

³²Kirchhoff, Besaettelsestidens, p. 36.

enabled the Government and King to escape. In the case of Norway resistance was possible because of the terrain of the country, poor roads and communication, inaccessibility except by air and sea and the size of the country, which allowed the Norwegian Army to withdraw gradually and regroup awaiting Allied aid.

Allied aid was not long in arriving. In fact, it had already begun before the German invasion of Norway. As stated above, the Allies cancelled their own operation against Norway when it became obvious that the Germans were preparing an invasion. Already before this there had been strong indications that an invasion was imminent. Since the first days of April RAF planes had monitored the naval build-up in northern German ports. Other definite reports had also arrived from a number of European capitals giving credence to the prospect of a German invasion of Norway. When the German task force began sailing on the sixth attempts were made to keep the enemy ships under aerial observation. On the seventh the British Home Fleet left Scapa Flow in order to meet the German naval force. Other British ships followed. The British Navy proved ineffectual in the face of overwhelming German air superiority and the ships were eventually recalled. Submarines, however, were ordered to maintain their positions and interfere as much as possible with the German fleet. Under Admiral Horton the submarines were concentrated off South and West Norway where they created havoc with German supply lines to the extent that all troop build-up immediately after the invasion had to be done by small ships routed from Jutland to ports in south Norway.³³ Once

³³Moulton, Norwegian Campaign, p. 108.

the Germans had landed British naval forces again sought out the enemy, this time meeting with considerable success, particularly in north Norway.

In Denmark the occupation of the country went smoothly. Neither the Government nor the King had managed to escape. It was therefore the German desire that Danish independence should to all outward appearances be maintained.³⁴ Denmark continued to protest the invasion but it was almost immediately decided to adapt conditions in the country to the occupation and accept the inevitable. Within a few days of the occupation the Germans had the Danish Foreign Ministry send a circular message to all its missions. The note was almost a paraphrase of the German justifications for the invasion and called for calm and order from everyone in the country.³⁵ The two problems which, apart from the occupation, plagued the Danish Government at this time concerned a rumoured putsch by the Danish National Socialists and the status of North Schleswig. The putsch proved to be merely a rumour, but even had it been serious it is doubtful whether the Germans would have allowed the coup since the Danish Nazis had virtually no native following. The greater problem concerned North Schleswig with its large German minority. There was no need to worry. When undertaking the occupation of Denmark the Germans had promised that they would respect Danish territorial integrity. This was not because the Germans considered this the

³⁴GD IX No. 81.

³⁵Ibid., No. 103.

right thing to do -- Polish territorial integrity had not been respected -- but because any incidents during the act of occupation and particularly any promises made to the German minority would have a detrimental effect on the neutral world, particularly the United States. Therefore, the frontier question was not to be raised by the German minority, a correct attitude was to be maintained towards Danish officials and no ostentatious fraternization was to be permitted between the invading army and the minority. The foundation for the model protectorate was already being laid. As before, Germany would discreetly look after the interests of the German minority in Denmark.³⁶

The sinking of the 'Bluecher' had temporarily turned back the German invasion force heading for Oslo. When the Germans did manage to reach the city they found that the King and the Government had fled. Hoping to end the fighting between the Norwegian and German military forces the German Ambassador in Oslo called for a meeting with the King. The King met Ambassador Brauer at Elverum on April 10 and was asked to name Quisling the head of the Government. This was refused and the Germans were informed that "Resistance will continue as long as possible."³⁷

There could be no question of legally making Quisling head of the Government. The Constitution specified that as such he would have to enjoy the support of the majority of the Norwegian people.

³⁶Ibid., No. 77.

³⁷Ibid., No. 83.

Quisling had only a few supporters and virtually no one took him serious as a politician. Because of Quisling's scant support in the country and the refusal of the bureacracy to work under him it was proposed that a directorate of the Supreme Court be set up as accorded under the Constitution for times when the King and Parliament (Storting) were absent.³⁸ However, the Constitutional provision specified the King's absence through death and, as Quisling himself pointed out to the Germans, this government would only be legal through the broadest interpretations.³⁹ In spite of the questioned legality of the Government Committee of the Supreme Court, it was nonetheless installed by the Germans on April 15.⁴⁰ There was really no alternative. The legitimate Government and Head of State had fled in the face of the enemy and would not cooperate with the Germans. To acknowledge Quisling as the head of a government would be to invite civil war in Norway; the country was unanimous in its rejection of Quisling and would resist him more than the Germans. The alternative of introducing a German military administration was likewise ill-advised as this would unquestionably give rise to popular resistance. The only plausible alternative was the introduction of the Government Committee of the Supreme Court. It enjoyed a quasi-legal position but was accepted by the population as being fully legal.

The Norwegian troops were ill-equipped and poorly trained. Morale was becoming worse in the face of constant retreat; in all too

³⁸Ibid., Nos. 95, 98, 111 and 113.

³⁹Ibid., No. 118.

⁴⁰Ibid., No. 124.

many instances the Norwegians would retreat upon being confronted by the Germans. There was some logic behind this. Most of the Company Commanders of the Norwegian Army had scant troops and were constantly promised reinforcements through mobilization. It was no surprise then that the commanders postponed fighting the Germans till more troops would be available for them. Unfortunately, this destroyed the morale of the fighting man who was coming to believe the propaganda heard on the Quisling-controlled radio about Norway not really being at war.

Such was the atmosphere in which the Allies landed at Namsos and Aandalsnes on the night of April 14. Earlier that same day British troops were disembarked at Harstad, near Narvik. The assault on Narvik came a month later, on May 13. Within three weeks of the Allied landings southern Norway had to be evacuated and the order for Narvik, in the north, came on May 24. It was to take about two weeks, till June 8, for the Allies to totally disengage themselves from Narvik.⁴¹

The debacle in Norway led, in part, to the fall of the Chamberlain Government. With the final withdrawal from Norway, the House of Commons gave vent to its fury. Norway had been a military defeat. The entire event had been fraught with vacillation: plans had been changed at the last moment on several occasions, military commanders had been opposed to taking necessary risks which might bring about success, supplies had been scanty and occasionally brought

⁴¹Churchill, Gathering Storm, pp. 652-53.

to the wrong destination. Thus, on May 7 and 8, the Opposition vilified the Government. Chamberlain attempted to introduce a National Government under himself but received no support from the Opposition parties. On May 10, amidst news of the invasion of Holland and Belgium, Chamberlain resigned urging Churchill to form a National Government.⁴²

Sweden was officially informed of the German invasion of Norway and Denmark at 8 a.m. on the morning of April 9 by the German Ambassador in Stockholm. It was expected of Sweden that she maintain the strictest neutrality and not interfere with the occupation. Furthermore, it was specified that Germany would expect the continuance of the ore deliveries to Germany.⁴³ Sweden dutifully agreed to comply with the German wishes. Within a few days Swedish compliance with German desires resulted in the prevention of Hambro, the President of the Norwegian Parliament (Storting), from making a speech over the Swedish radio in the name of his King after both had taken flight from the Germans.⁴⁴ In these first few weeks of the German assault on Scandinavia Sweden was very concerned with the possibility of a German invasion thrust upon herself. Because of this, Foreign Minister Guenther assured Germany that any military preparations being taken by the country were purely for the purpose of defending the country's neutrality and was no reflection on its attitude towards the German occupation of Denmark and Norway.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 658-63.

⁴³GD IX No. 55

⁴⁴Ibid., No. 91.

It was in such an atmosphere that Sweden permitted the transit of supplies to the German Army in the Narvik area. These were essentially non-military supplies such as clothing, food, medical supplies and skis. Permission for the transit of medical personnel was also granted. When the proposals for transit rights for these goods and personnel had been placed before the Swedish Cabinet on April 17 it had been decided that, while permission would be granted, it should be for only this individual case and should not be considered as a precedence.⁴⁵ Within two months, however, the Germans would be moving troops and supplies through Sweden with virtually no restrictions. At the time of the initial permission for transit the Allies were still fighting the Germans in Norway and the possibility, however slight, of the Germans being ousted still remained. In such a situation, though herself fearing invasion, Sweden could be reasonably stern in refusing continuous transit. It was not till the Allies withdrew from Norway that Sweden found herself completely sealed off from the west and had to concede virtually all that the Germans demanded.

Sweden refused to give any aid to the fighting Norwegians and likewise refused to join the Allies in their conflict with Nazi Germany. The Swedes officially stated that their refusal of aid to Norway stemmed from the fact that Norway had undertaken no measures to prevent the occupation and now could not expect Swedish armed intervention. This situation appeared somewhat akin to the predicament Finland had found

⁴⁵Ibid., No. 127 footnotes.

herself in some months earlier. The Swedes emphasized one essential difference; the attack on Finland had been considered a local war and therefore Sweden could justify sending aid while the war in Norway was part of the larger world conflagration and aid to the Norwegians would hence be a violation of Swedish neutrality.⁴⁶

While the Allies and Germans were still fighting in Norway, Sweden had undertaken a scheme which might have brought peace to Norway and proven Swedish sympathy for the Norwegians. At the end of May Sweden suggested that the hotly contested Narvik area be neutralized and occupied by Swedish troops. Through this scheme Norway could retain control of the northern part of the country while the Germans occupied the south. With Swedish troops in the middle it was hoped both sides would respect the neutralized area.⁴⁷

Presented at the end of May, the Allies showed interest within a few days. The Germans, however, correctly interpreted Allied acquiescence as representing a need for the troops elsewhere.⁴⁸ Accordingly, the Germans did not show much enthusiasm for the scheme — after all, they were winning in Norway — but promised that the matter would be studied.

Within the next few days the Allied situation in Norway deteriorated rapidly and the Germans lost interest in the Swedish proposal. On June 7, the Norwegian Government advised Sweden that

⁴⁶Friis, Scandinavia, pp. 283.

⁴⁷GD IX No. 351.

⁴⁸GD IX No. 386. The German Foreign Minister gave instructions that the issue was to be treated dilatorily.

the plan had best be abandoned.⁴⁹ The following day Sweden handed German Ambassador Wied, in Stockholm, a communication from the Norwegian Government stating that the King and the Government had left the country and given orders for the cessation of hostilities. General Ruge, head of the Norwegian Army, was ordered to make contact with the German High Command in Oslo to conduct negotiations.⁵⁰ At 4 p.m. on June 9 the fighting stopped in Norway and the following day the capitulation was signed at Trondheim.⁵¹

When the Germans invaded Denmark and Norway the Soviet Union was informed in terms stressing the imminent Anglo-French invasion. The German note specified that Sweden and Finland would in no way be affected by the invasion.⁵² Molotov answered the same day. His sigh of relief is almost audible in the document! He stated that England had certainly gone too far in her disregard of the rights of neutral nations, German transgression of these same rights not being mentioned.⁵³ An Anglo-French invasion of Scandinavia had been a source of worry to the Russians since the abortive Allied aid-to-Finland scheme of a few months prior. There was no question that a successful Allied landing on the Scandinavian peninsula would reopen

⁴⁹Transiteringsfraagor, april-juni 1940, no. 303, cited in Arnold and Veronica M. Toynbee, ed., The War and The Neutrals, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 182.

⁵⁰GD IX No. 400.

⁵¹Ibid., No. 405.

⁵²Ibid., No. 54.

⁵³Ibid., No. 73, Raymond Sontag and James Stuart Beddie, ed., Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941, Washington, D.C., Department of State, 1948, p. 138.

the Finland question to the detriment of the Soviet Union. It was thus that the Soviet Union welcomed the German invasion of Denmark and Norway with obvious relief. This same fear of Allied intervention could also be seen in the rushed termination of war with Finland and the relatively mild peace treaty.

After the German entry into Denmark and Norway, the Soviet Union made a complete turnabout in its relations with Germany. In the immediate period before the German invasion of the north the Soviet Union had become more 'correct' with regard to Germany; visas were suddenly difficult to obtain, the offer of a 'North Base' (Basis Nord) in the USSR for German use was withdrawn and petroleum and grain shipments were suspended. German Ambassador Schulenburg wrote from Moscow that he thought this was the result of Allied pressure and sharp attacks on the neutrals (the USSR still being neutral). The Soviet Union was extremely fearful of being forced into the war by giving the British and French any pretexts for reproaching their actions with regard to the belligerents. When Germany successfully occupied the Scandinavian perimeter the Soviet Union no longer feared any Allied interference in the north. Grain and petroleum supplies once more rolled towards the Third Reich, their suspension having been termed the "excessive zeal of subordinate agencies."⁵⁴

The Soviet Union, however, still held some fear lest Germany should now present a threat to herself and her newly won conquests in

⁵⁴GD IX No. 120, Sontag, Nazi Soviet Relations, pp. 138-40.

Finland. Accordingly, Molotov asked Schulenburg whether or not, as persistent rumours had it, Germany had any intentions of ultimately including Sweden in her Scandinavian operations. Molotov went on to say that the Soviet Union was very interested in preserving Swedish neutrality and as its violation would be frowned upon by the Soviet Government, he hoped that action against Sweden would be avoided at all costs.⁵⁵ Ribbentrop emphatically assured Molotov that Germany had no designs on Sweden and stated that Germany entirely shared the Soviet Union's hope of preserving Swedish neutrality.⁵⁶ But real Swedish neutrality was soon to disappear.

As was stated above, the Swedish Cabinet on April 17 allowed the Germans to send one shipment only of certain specified equipment through the country onward to Narvik. The Swedish Government had no intention of continuing this practise, even going so far as to deny the fact when it was reported in the press.⁵⁷ Within a short time German pressure was to break down Swedish resistance and Nazi troops and supply trains roamed freely through Sweden. What had happened in the intervening period?

After Germany occupied Denmark and Norway, Sweden was cut off from trade with the west and became increasingly dependent on supplies of coal, lumber, cellulose and paper from Germany.⁵⁸ Furthermore, all overseas trade could in fact only enter Sweden if

⁵⁵GD IX No. 104, Sontag, Nazi-Soviet Relations, p. 140.

⁵⁶GD IX No. 120.

⁵⁷Ibid., No. 154.

⁵⁸Ibid., No. 171.

allowed to do so by Germany since the latter virtually controlled the area from the top of Norway to the border of the Netherlands. This dependence on German good will became even more apparent after the fall of France a few months hence. Germany was also the principal foreign supplier of Swedish armaments which were being desperately sought to strengthen the country's defences and to replenish the stocks which had been depleted by aid to the Finns. In such a situation Germany could not help but exert a strong influence in Swedish policies and internal affairs.

Already within a few days of the Swedish Cabinet's decision to permit a single limited transport of supplies through Sweden the German Legation in Stockholm obtained permission for the passage of about 600 German seamen from merchant ships in Narvik harbour. This group passed through Sweden between April 21 and 23 and actually included German naval personnel for which allowance had not been made.⁵⁹ Within a week, on April 28, Germany was striving to obtain agreement with the Swedes to have the trains carrying the initial supplies to Narvik return with German wounded and shipwrecked, and possibly with prisoners. The Germans strove to justify their case on humanitarian grounds and the Swedish Foreign Ministry quietly assented.⁶⁰

On the same day, an unofficial agreement was reached in Berlin between Goering and the Swedish Military Attaché. By this agreement Sweden would allow railway transport for rations, medical supplies etc. to Norway provided that single freight cars, as opposed to freight

⁵⁹Ibid., No. 179 footnote.

⁶⁰Ibid., No. 179.

trains, were used and consignment was made from a German to a Norwegian private firm. To get official acceptance of this agreement the Germans decided to put pressure on Sweden by withholding arms deliveries. The German Legation in Stockholm was advised to make contact with the Swedish War Minister and inform him that should his Government consent to the Goering-Military Attaché agreement, the temporary delays in the export of arms would end. Sweden would accordingly receive 52 two-centimeter antiaircraft guns and 14 four-centimeter antiaircraft guns as per previous contracts. Should the Swedes agree to the transport of arms and ammunition to the German forces in Norway another contract from the previous month would be filled. Under this arrangement Sweden would receive: 1) 2,850 machine guns with 38 million rounds of ammunition, 2) 24,000 rounds of howitzer ammunition, 3) 30 two-centimeter naval antiaircraft guns with ammunition, 4) 200 three-centimeter and seven-centimeter antitank guns with 500 rounds each, 5) 1,000 pistols, and 6) the possibility of further two-centimeter antiaircraft guns and 100,000 rifle barrels. Should Sweden insist on heavy antiaircraft guns in exchange for transit of German war materials the Germans expected transit rights of arms and ammunition, without limitation or restriction, for their troops in the Trondheim and Narvik areas. The Germans were desperate and even invented a dubious scheme to circumvent Swedish neutrality by 'selling' the German supplies to Sweden on the agreement that these would be repurchased and delivered to a specified destination.⁶¹ The following day, May 1, further instruc-

⁶¹Ibid., No. 183.

tions reached the German Legation in Stockholm from Ribbentrop stating that if no agreement could be made with the Swedish War Minister the Legation should attempt to arrange a meeting between itself and the Swedish Foreign Minister.⁶²

When the German Legation approached the Swedish War Minister they were immediately rebuffed at the mention of arms transit, being told that only the Swedish Foreign Minister was in a position to negotiate with problems affecting neutrality. Meanwhile, in Berlin, Goering was telling the Swedish intermediary, Dahlerus, to have the Swedish Government send a delegation to Berlin which was empowered to give an answer on the arms transit question. On May 11 a Swedish delegation under Admiral Tamm arrived in Berlin and replied in the negative. Thereafter an embargo was placed on the export of war material to Sweden.⁶³

Shortly thereafter came the Allied assault on Narvik which threatened to cause a withdrawal of the German forces in the area. In an attempt to forestall this the German Foreign Ministry made a series of desperate attempts to obtain permission for the transit of supplies through Sweden to the beleaguered troops holding out in the Narvik area. On May 16, Richert, the Swedish Ambassador in Berlin, met with Ribbentrop in Godesberg,⁶⁴ to discuss the question of transit for Narvik as well as unhindered traffic between Stockholm

⁶²Ibid., No. 184.

⁶³Ibid., No. 202 Footnote 1).

⁶⁴Richert met with Ribbentrop in the same hotel in which Hitler had negotiated with Chamberlain and Daladier in September, 1938.

and Trondheim and along the route Oslo-Goteborg-Trelleborg and transit of destroyer crews from Narvik.⁶⁵ The following day Weizsaecker, at the Foreign Ministry, also spoke with Richert before the latter returned to Stockholm to confer with his Government. Weizsaecker told Richert that the transport to Narvik which had been discussed the previous day with Ribbentrop would involve three trains of thirty to forty cars each and would be carrying various types of heavy arms as well as clothing and other military supplies. It was stressed that should the German force be forced to evacuate Narvik it was highly probable that the Swedish railway line leading to the port would be destroyed by the Allies to the extent that Swedish exports would suffer. It was intimated that this request was for one occasion only and was desperately sought after by the Germans.⁶⁶

The following day Richert returned from Stockholm after conferring most of the night with the Swedish Cabinet and Foreign Minister. The Swedish Government, Weizsaecker was informed, was unable to comply with Germany's desire for transport of arms through Sweden though free passage would be allowed 2,000 seamen of the destroyer crews from Narvik. This act, however, was not conceded without misgivings though it was felt that it could be tolerated since it only indirectly worked to the disadvantage of Norway and the Allies.⁶⁷ Germany was told that to have given permission was contrary to the stated neutrality of Sweden and would be inconsistent with Sweden's

⁶⁵GD IX No. 259 footnote 1).

⁶⁶Ibid., No. 259.

⁶⁷Ibid., No. 268.

policy of refusing to aid either side in so far as Norway had repeatedly been turned down when begging Sweden for arms.⁶⁸ Sweden did point out that concession had been granted to the free passage of the 2,000 seamen who, under international law, should by rights be interned by the Swedes.

Throughout this time anxieties were present in Swedish circles concerning the defence of the iron ore mines as well as the increasing amount of 'innocent' German transit across Sweden. As stated above, Sweden was increasingly dependent on Germany for arms supplies which at present were being withheld. The German Government had decided to stall deliveries until such time as Sweden was more amenable to German wishes concerning transit of troops and supplies. However, it was not long before the German Foreign Ministry discovered that withholding arms from Sweden might work to the detriment of Germany. This was the case for two reasons: in the first place, since Germany had broken the contract for the deliveries of arms, Sweden might do the same with the iron ore deliveries; in the second place, and more important in the eyes of Germany, without adequate protection against attack from the air it was quite conceivable to the Germans that Britain would attempt by air strikes to close the mines or Lulea harbour. Therefore, Germany was to find it in her own vital interest to supply Sweden with adequate high-grade antiaircraft weapons as well as other equipment to insure Swedish Neutrality, and, hence, ability to export

⁶⁸On April 12, 1940, Swedish Minister President Hansson stated in a radio address that "It is not consistent with strict neutrality to permit any belligerent to make use of Swedish territory for its activity." GD IX Editor's note. p. 142.

iron ore.⁶⁹ The German Government need not have worried, as it later discovered. Shortly after the German realization of the need to arm Sweden, a senior member of the Swedish Foreign Ministry told the German Ambassador in Stockholm of a conversation he had had with Churchill, in which Churchill had stated that the British Government had no intention of taking any action against the iron ore mines themselves.⁷⁰

While the final stages of the war in Norway still raged, Sweden was becoming concerned about the apparent misuse of the restricted transit rights afforded Germany. Accordingly, Berlin was requested to refrain from asking for further passage of 'Medical' personnel as these groups were becoming increasingly larger.⁷¹ After this, personnel transit ceased till after the defeat of the Allies in Norway.

Barely had the Norwegians been defeated and the Allies withdrawn before the Germans once again brought up the question of transit rights. On June 13, a note was circulated in the German Foreign Ministry which had originated with the High Command of the Wehrmacht. The note called for the transit of all types of war material and supplies through Sweden for the supply of German troops in Norway as well as permission for members of the Wehrmacht to travel through Sweden on duty and leave journeys. It was felt that Sweden's reasons for previous refusal would no longer be valid in view of the cessation

⁶⁹Ibid., No. 290.

⁷⁰Ibid., No. 306.

⁷¹Ibid., No. 348.

of hostilities in Norway. The need, however, for bringing guns and equipment still remained. It was imperative for the Germans to bring in guns and ammunition for coastal and air defence if they were to make Norway secure and, since air and sea routes were still exposed to Allied countermeasures, the safest route was through Sweden.⁷²

Sweden was approached a few days later and on June 19 replied in the affirmative. There would be no problem with the transit of goods, though the German Government must request permission for each instance. The transit of members of the Wehrmacht was another matter and it was suggested that this be taken up by the German Military Attachés in Stockholm for discussion.⁷³

By the end of June a tentative agreement had been drawn up to regulate the transit of various war material through Sweden and to provide for the conclusion of an agreement governing the transit of troops. In view of this, a decision emanated from Hitler to the effect that the embargo on war materials sold to Sweden should be lifted. Apart from the fact that this was repayment to Sweden for being very accommodating in regard to transit rights it was also necessary for Germany to export these goods since the money obtained was needed to pay for the imports of Swedish iron ore.⁷⁴ On the question of Wehrmacht transit Sweden later proposed that the transport of personnel should only consist of 150 men per week going in both directions, to and from

⁷²Ibid., No. 427.

⁷³Ibid., No. 486.

⁷⁴GD X No. 15.

Germany though provision was made for special cases under which individuals might travel through Sweden.⁷⁵ The next day, June 30, Swedish Foreign Minister Gunther told a senior member of the German Legation in Stockholm that should it become necessary for Germany to 'supplement' the Narvik forces the Swedish Government would find appropriate ways of providing for transit of such German forces.⁷⁶

The exchange of notes, governing the transit of German troop and supplies, took place on July 8 in Stockholm with one notable departure from the original draft of the agreement. Sweden had first suggested that transport of Wehrmacht personnel be kept down to 150 men but in the exchange of notes on July 8 the number provided for had been increased to 500 at the insistence of Germany and was further increased the following September.⁷⁷ These German troops were on furlough and were not allowed to carry arms.

The Allies naturally objected to this gross breach of neutrality by Sweden. Britain had made her first objection on April 26 in the face of the initial German supply train through Sweden. Further objections followed in an interview between Lord Halifax and the Swedish Ambassador on June 26, the day after Swedish-German agreement had been attained governing the text of the transit right-notes to be exchanged.⁷⁸ A sharp note of protest was made on July 20 after the transit agreement had been made.⁷⁹ To these various objections

⁷⁵Ibid., No. 60.

⁷⁶Ibid., Nos. 64 and 110 footnote 4).

⁷⁷Ibid., Nos. 131, 132, and 133.

⁷⁸Toynbee, War and the Neutrals, p. 185.

⁷⁹Loc. Cit.

Sweden was to reply that after hostilities had ceased in Norway there was no breach of neutrality in allowing transit of German troops since this would not lead to any reinforcement of the occupation forces.

There was no doubt that Sweden had agreed to the concession of transit rights under duress and to the great dismay of the Swedish public.

The Swedish situation was perhaps best summed up in the statement addressed to the Norwegian Government-in-exile, "All neutrality policy has its limitations in the means which are at the disposal of the neutral state."⁸⁰

Before long the Allies were forced to make their withdrawal from the European continent and all semblance of Swedish neutrality came to an end. It was no longer a question of maintaining a political neutrality in a war between Great Powers but merely of surviving. By now, Sweden was completely surrounded by the Soviet Union and Germany, or countries occupied or defeated by these. Overseas trade was even more at the mercy of the German forces and eventually came to a virtual standstill. With the occupation of Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Netherlands and France, Sweden was cut off from trade markets which had represented about 70 percent of the aggregate value of Sweden's foreign trade in 1938.⁸¹ Sweden became increasingly dependent on German-occupied Europe for obtaining vital supplies, and thus she entered a phase in her neutrality policy which lasted till 1943 during which time she was most accommodating to the Germans in virtually every

⁸⁰Friis, Scandinavia, p. 284.

⁸¹G. Hagglof, "Swedish Trade Policy in Wartime", Le Nord, vol. IV 1941, p. 94.

respect.⁸² In these subsequent years Sweden was governed by the fear that Germany would win the war — in 1940 this was a very real fear — or at least obtain a political settlement which would leave Germany as a very strong power in Europe.

The German blockade which cut Sweden off from most of her world trade was, however, of some benefit to the Allied cause. At the time of the invasion of Denmark and Norway, about half of Sweden's ocean-going merchant marine was overseas or in Allied ports. Having largely been cut off from home these vessels were leased to the Allies after some pressure was exerted on Sweden.⁸³

Sweden was forced to make further concessions to the Germans in 1941 with the German attack on the Soviet Union when the Germans demanded, and got, permission to transport fully-armed combat troops through Sweden on their way to Finland. By 1943, however, Sweden's attitude of accommodation had changed. There were a number of reasons for this, first and foremost of which was that it was no longer apparent that Germany would win the war. Furthermore, by 1943, a desperate rearmament programme had increased the Swedish army to 600,000 strong — ten times the size of 1939.⁸⁴ With Germany deeply entrenched in the Soviet Union and increasingly subject to heavy assaults from the west

⁸²One of the first acts which the Germans undertook through this accommodating attitude of the Swedes was to lay an anti-submarine net across the Sound using German civilian personnel in Swedish waters. This agreement between the German and Swedish Navies was reached on May 26. GD IX No. 368.

⁸³Friis, Scandinavia, p. 284.

⁸⁴Barclay, "Alliance", Australian Outlook, pp. 202-03.

there was no longer any real fear that Sweden would be invaded if she did not comply with German wishes. The change in Swedish official attitude became apparent with the relaxation of censorship regulations which resulted in increasing condemnations of Germany in the Swedish press. In a trade agreement with Germany in 1944, Sweden cut the sale of Swedish ball bearings by 50 percent and iron ore by about 30 percent of the previous year's figures. After the Normandy invasion, shipments of ball bearings to Germany were limited to about 20 percent of the previous year and in 1945 the trade agreement was not renewed.⁸⁵

In the period from the outbreak of the Second World War till 1943 Sweden was rather amenable to Germany and became increasingly so after the German invasion of Denmark and Norway. This state of good relations was a principal reason for Germany not invading Sweden; afterall, why invade a country when the concessions you seek can be yours for the asking? But there were other reasons as well. Sweden was willing to trade with Germany before April, 1940, in compliance with the neutrality policy and after this date she was forced to do so by virtue of being completely surrounded by the Germans and Russians. There was also no doubt that Sweden would defend herself even more successfully than had the Norwegians since the Swedes were considerably better armed. A conquest of Sweden, particularly since it might take time, would probably have delayed the German timetable

⁸⁵Joachim Joesten, "Phases in Swedish Neutrality", Foreign Affairs, vol. 23 no. 2 (January 1945), pp. 328-29.

and would probably have resulted in the iron ore mines being sabotaged by the Swedes. There can be no doubt that the attitude of the Soviet Union also entered into the German decision not to invade Sweden. On April 9, Molotov had warned the German Government that the Soviet Union was vitally interested in the maintenance of Swedish neutrality.⁸⁶ Sweden was thus to act as a buffer state between the German and Soviet spheres of interest. In any event, it has been suggested that a successful invasion of Sweden could not have been undertaken by Germany with less than 400,000 men. Such an invasion would have been similar in dimension to an invasion of Britain, if not by the numbers involved at least by the logistics of moving these men across the Sound.⁸⁷ The prize would hardly be worth the effort -- particularly when it was there for the asking.

⁸⁶Sontag, Nazi-Soviet Relations, p. 140.

⁸⁷Barclay "Alliance", Australian Outlook, p. 201.

CONCLUSION

Scandinavian neutrality developed as a result of the failure of the League of Nations. The four Scandinavian States had entered the League full of hopes for the future. Collective security had been the phrase on which most of Europe's hopes had been pinned. There was initially every indication that the League would fulfill all the hopes vested within its Government. By the middle 'thirties, however, this hope had evaporated: Italy was in Abyssinia, Japan in China, and German muscles were flexed in anticipation of things to come. The League proved impotent. No action was taken to thwart the ambitions of expansionist powers. Disillusionment with the League of Nations resulted in Scandinavia reverting to a policy of neutrality.

The difficulty facing Scandinavia was one of maintaining an independent stance in the face of the European holocaust which was increasingly expected. In the First World War Scandinavia had been able to maintain a profitable neutrality to the chagrin of the belligerents. Though no one as yet knew, the warring nations would not make the same mistake again. The British blockade in the First World War had been circumvented through the refusal of Norway to cooperate to fully close the North Sea. German naval power had been locked up in German ports save for a brief sojourn off Jutland. Towards the late 'thirties evidence was mounting that the German Navy desired ports in Norway.

In order to offer a deterrent to invasion the Scandinavian countries would have to maintain a strong and united front. This was to be the difficulty, and subsequently the defeat, of Scandinavian neutrality. Scandinavia was, in fact, threatened from two sides by

two different powers who might or might not be allied. Germany and the Soviet Union independently presented a threat to some area of Scandinavia; united, the threat did not diminish. Germany threatened primarily Denmark and Norway because of their strategic location; the Soviet Union threatened Finland for historical and strategic reasons. Herein lay the dilemma and destruction of Scandinavian unity. Finland could very likely expect aid from Germany against aggression from Russia. The Finnish attitude to a firm stance towards Germany by Scandinavia was suspect, as was the converse since Denmark and Norway -- Sweden was a borderline case -- were not threatened by the Soviet Union and therefore would be disinclined to act firmly towards this country. This inability to define the potential aggressor caused a lack of direction in joint Scandinavian defence.

To further aggravate the dilemma disarmament existed to some degree in all the Nordic countries. Denmark was almost totally disarmed, Norway in the hands of a strongly pacifist Government, Finland willing but financially incapable of adequate armaments. Only Sweden had the financial capabilities and the determination to arm herself. Sweden alone could not arm and defend Scandinavia, despite her greater wealth.

There was a long history of Scandinavian cooperation. (This had been particularly apparent at the League of Nations.) A general desire to cooperate in neutrality was evident though a willingness to undertake the effort appears to have been lacking. There was a refusal to recognize the potential of the dilemma facing Scandinavia.

Norway clung to a pacifist policy feeling safe from attack through the belief of a British supremacy in the Atlantic. Denmark feared rearmament would aggravate Germany and give her cause for aggression. Finnish politicians, while recognizing the gravity of the situation, were unwilling to expend the sorely needed funds on armaments. Only Swedish military expenditures steadily rose in the late 'thirties. Scandinavian cooperation, after much discussion, was only successful in the establishment of such laws as those governing marriage, elections etc.

Economic cooperation had been established for the eventuality of war. Inter-Scandinavian trade of necessary goods was to take place in time of crisis. When war broke out chaos ensued. Export restrictions had been placed on all the goods which were to be interchanged. The inter-governmental talks on economic cooperation, whose task it was to insure the smooth functioning of the program, met for the last time in September, 1938. A meeting was scheduled for the following year but was postponed because of the outbreak of war till the end of the year when the Finno-Russian War again led to a postponement. Economic cooperation illustrates the dilemma of the entire effort of Scandinavian cooperation; the desire and acceptance in principle was there but lacking was a realistic approach to the problem.

Cooperation was only feasible on a smaller scale, between fewer countries and for specific objectives. The Swedish-Finnish attempt to rearm the Aaland Islands is perhaps the best known example of this. There was every indication that the project would be successful: both

countries were willing to pay the costs, the rearmament of the islands could not be construed as being aggressive towards anyone, and the consent of the signatories of the Aaland Islands Convention had been assured (though with stipulations from Germany). It was when the Soviet Union -- the country primarily against whom the rearmament was to guard -- objected that the project disintegrated!

Finland found herself in a precarious position in her relations with the Soviet Union. The mounting fear in the Soviet Union of a German attack led that country to approach Finland, starting in 1938, for the purpose of strengthening Soviet defences in the Leningrad area. The Finns constantly refused any effective cooperation. This attitude was totally unrealistic. As seen previously, Mannerheim had informed the members of the Government that Finland was hardly in a position to refuse Soviet demands, demands which he thought quite within the realities of the situation. There can be no question but that the Soviet Union demanded only what was required for their defences. Stalin on several occasions reduced his demands to nominal concessions on the part of Finland. The Finns fought gallantly in the subsequent war but it was a struggle with a preordained end. Finland was utterly defeated and Russia got what she wanted though not before being chastised and expelled from the League of Nations -- an action that was suspect under the best of circumstances.

The period from September, 1939, to April, 1940, was a time of true neutrality for Denmark, Norway and Sweden. War was raging and Scandinavian goods and shipping was sought by both sides. No infringements of neutrality occurred during the greater part of this time. This fact

was undoubtedly due in no small measure to the threat to terminate trade should the neutral ships of these countries be interfered with.

The most important commodity that Scandinavia had was the Swedish iron ore. There can be no dispute over the importance of this iron ore for the German war effort between the outbreak of war and the collapse of France. In 1940 virtually all iron ore imports into Germany came from Sweden and these represented about half of the total German consumption. It is not necessarily true that Germany would have been defeated had Swedish ore deliveries ceased -- there is no conclusive evidence for or against such a supposition -- but arms production would have had to have been drastically curtailed. The key factor is how much iron could have been obtained from scrap iron and non-military production in case of an emergency. No conclusive figures have as yet been uncovered to ascertain to what degree, and for how long, Germany could be self-sufficient in iron (this figure would include stock piles, German production and what resources could be gleaned from scrap and non-strategic production). After the defeat of the Allies in France, of course, this picture changed completely. French resources were now available to Germany and dependence on Sweden drastically curtailed.

In this period of neutrality the Allies did their best to interrupt the iron ore traffic to Germany. Though perhaps justifiable due to the expediency of the situation the various Allied acts of aggression are nonetheless reprehensible for the disregard for international law and the neutrality of the countries involved. The

subsequent German invasion was likewise a reprehensible act but, like Allied action, was warranted by the strategic needs of the moment. The German invasion plans had originated with the desire of the German Navy for bases in Norway with Denmark occupied to insure the security of the lines of communications. By the early months of 1940, however, the struggle between the Allies and the Germans raged over the existence of the iron ore route. British naval action in Norwegian territorial waters were taking place with increasing occurrence and it was only a question of time before it became British policy to maintain a constant interference with the iron ore route. The step to this ultimate end took place on April 8 with the mining of certain sectors of Norwegian territorial waters.

Though there is no reason to suppose that the Germans knew of this Allied step, it is clear that the Germans saw such an event as taking place eventually. Though documentary evidence is lacking to prove this was the ultimate cause of the German invasion it seems reasonable to surmise that Allied action in Norwegian waters played a significant role in the decision to invade. The appointment of General Falkenhorst as commander of 'Weseruebung' took place four days after the 'Altmark' incident which had enraged Hitler.

The Allies had planned their own invasion to counteract German 'reaction' to the mining of Norwegian waters. When the German invasion began the Allied plan was scrapped by the British Admiralty without the knowledge of the Government. A decision was subsequently taken to engage the enemy in Norway but the Allied landings proved a disaster. The disorganization that presented itself with the Allied

landings in Norway were in no small part due to the chaotic changes in plans that took place immediately after the German landings. Because of this and because of German numerical superiority the Allied sojourn in Norway was brief.

Sweden was not invaded. There were numerous reasons for this. There was really no need; with Norway and Denmark occupied and a defeated Finland to the east the Germans (still allied with the Soviet Union) could exert tremendous pressure on Sweden. Furthermore, the Swedes had already shown their willingness to cooperate in the question of transit rights. The extent to which Swedish arms played a part is questionable; while an invasion (it would undoubtedly have to be sea-borne) would be costly in terms of men and equipment there is no doubt that Germany would have been capable of carrying it out. Soviet remonstrations against a German invasion of Sweden played a minimal role. Though Germany was undoubtedly aware of the Soviet position no protests against an invasion were received till April, 1940, when the German position was already stable.

The Scandinavian experience showed that neutrality is only a viable policy as long as no major power finds this policy in conflict with its own strategic interests.

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APPENDIX

Secret Protocol to the Treaty of Non-Aggression Between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

On the occasion of the signature of the Non-Aggression Treaty between the German Reich and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the undersigned plenipotentiaries of the two Parties discussed in strictly confidential conversations the question of the delimitation of their respective spheres of interest in Eastern Europe. These conversations led to the following result:

1. In the event of a territorial and political transformation in the territories belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern frontier of Lithuania shall represent the frontier of the spheres of interest of both of Germany and the U.S.S.R. In this connection the interest of Lithuania in the Vilna territory is recognized by both Parties.

2. In the event of a territorial and political transformation of the territories belonging to the Polish State, the spheres of interest of both Germany and the U.S.S.R. shall be bounded approximately by the line of the Rivers Narev, Vistula, and San.

The question whether the interest of both Parties make the maintenance of an independent Polish State appear desirable and how the frontiers of this State should be drawn can be definitely determined only in the course of further political developments.

In any case both Governments will resolve this question by means of a friendly understanding.

3. With regard to South-Eastern Europe, the Soviet side emphasizes its interest in Bessarabia. The German side declares complete political désintéressement in these territories.

4. This Protocol will be treated by both parties as strictly secret.

Moscow, August 23, 1939.

For the Government of

the German Reich:

v. Ribbentrop.

With full power of the

Government of the U.S.S.R.:

V. Molotov.

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